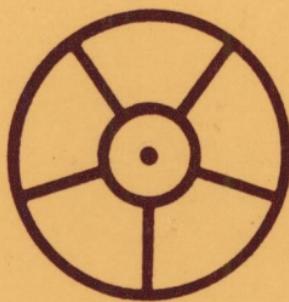
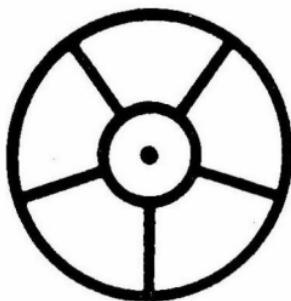


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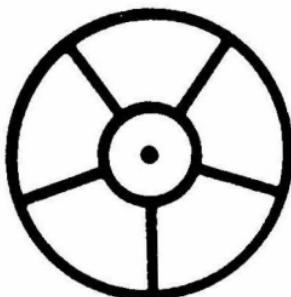
Remembering
Sweet Mother and Sri Aurobindo

Darshan



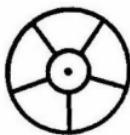
Remembering
Sweet Mother and Sri Aurobindo

Darshan



Remembering
Sweet Mother and Sri Aurobindo

DARSHAN



This compilation is brought out as a commemoration of 50th Anniversary of the Supramental Manifestation.

Our acknowledgements to Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry for their permission to use extracts from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

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Sri Aurobindo International Institute of
Educational Research, Auroville.

First Published in February 2006

Published by

Remembering the Mother Programme Team,
Sri Aurobindo International Institute of
Educational Research, Auroville,
with a grant from the Ministry of
Human Resource Development,
Government of India.

Typeset and printed at

All India Press,
Post Box No. 51, Kennedy Nagar,
Pondicherry – 605 001
E-Mail: aippdy@vsnl.com
India.

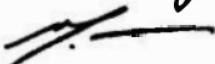
Conidiction
a
Auroville



Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities.

The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.

8-9-65.





A deep of compassion, a hushed sanctuary,
Her inward help unbarred a gate in heaven;
Love in her was wider than the universe,
The whole world could take refuge in her single heart.

Message for the Inauguration of Auroville

28. 2. 68.

Greetings from Auroville
to all men of good will

are invited to Auroville all
those who thirst for progress
and aspire to a higher
and truer life.

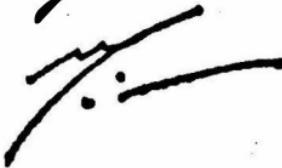


TRANSFORMATION

There is a
Supreme Divine Consciousness.

We want to manifest this
Divine Consciousness in the
physical life.

Blessings

A handwritten signature consisting of a stylized 'M' and a horizontal line with a small 'i' at the end.

There is a Supreme Divine Consciousness. We want to manifest this Divine Consciousness in the physical life.

Blessings
Mother

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This Garland of Remembrances, woven by Jothi Charles (coeditor) and many others who have put in their efforts at various stages, is a collective offering at the Feet of our sweet Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Foreword

*Lt.Gen. Ashoke Chatterjee
(Retd)*

A bouquet of flowers has been offered to the Mother by her children in the form of personal reminiscences. Our grateful thanks to the offerings of these children who have consciously chosen to walk Her Sunlit path and have been aspiring for the realization of their infinite self being. These recollections will enthuse many more aspirants on their onward inward journey.

Spirituality has always accepted the reality of the Supreme in humanity. The Mother descends into the individual form of the otherwise unknown and unknowable Godhead and leads us to work out the Will of the Divine. She guides us in transforming the entire Nature and divinising it. The Mother is the Mahashakti, the Parashakti, the Supreme Shakti and the omniscient Supremo: the Mother reveals to us that it is possible to see the whole universe within oneself; to understand all its forces and powers governing it.

She supports our spiritual attempts at all levels and takes with Her the receptive segment of humanity in the uphill endeavour. Even in Her prayers and meditations the Mother is not praying for Herself; She is praying on behalf of the earth and all humanity. It is Mother's consciousness and love which is transforming each one of us in the measure of our receptivity. This linkage of love with the Divine is all important in our endeavour. Our conscious surrender will establish the intimate love and trust relationship, the mantra of ceaseless self-transcendence. Only the Mother's Force can up bear and uplift us to the required status necessary for transformation.

The Mother tells us that each one of us can transcend and grow into immortality. By the very nature of evolutionary process, we will sooner rather than later succeed in affirming the prediction of the Divine in us and also in the universe. It is this knowledge, that the material universe will one day be the

home of the Divine, should guide our energies for the building of this great habitat, Auroville. It is the Mother who is building it and we are only the labourers in Her work. — Her hands and instruments. It is our responsibility to help the universe and not escape it .

Auroville, dedicated to the Mother's vision as a place of "unending education and a youth that never ages" is the place of growth of capacities, possibilities, of the field of action and range of consciousness and progress in the working out of details. It is this consecration of our life to the realization of something higher and broader that will free us from the weight of the passing years. The Mother asks us to live for the new creation to grow stronger and stronger while remaining young and progressive.

Freedom, equality, brotherhood are the three godheads of the soul; One who sees God in all will serve the Mother's cause; One's individual freedom and perfection has to be seen as one with the universal life. It is a spiritual and inner freedom that can create a perfect human order. The Mother exhorts "Auroville wants to manifest the Divine consciousness on earth as an attempt to express human unity".

Our loving gratitude goes out to our talented friends Syamala and Varadharajan for their painstaking effort in getting the recorded talks transcribed and typing out the texts and reaching out personally to each one of the children to complete the offering. But for them, the publication of these personal experiences would have remained hidden from other seekers. Our gratitude to them.

For oneself, reading these personal perceptions has brought me closer to the lotus feet of the Mother, the Mahashakti, the Parashakti and the Supreme Shakti.

Introduction

Shraddhavan

The series of programmes entitled “Remembering the Mother” was started in January 2001 at the request of some people who were relative newcomers to Auroville, and who felt that they missed the joy and privilege of a personal physical contact with the Mother and therefore very much enjoyed hearing, from those who did have that good fortune, what it was like. But I think we should remember that even for those who come newly into the atmosphere of Mother and Sri Aurobindo — whether they come to the Ashram or to Auroville or get a contact through a book or in some other way — it is very possible for all to have an inner contact with the Mother. The purpose of these sessions was to respond to that kind of receptivity, to evoke it. But nobody needs to feel, “Oh, those who have seen the Mother were so lucky and I don’t have that same opportunity.” For all of us, it is possible to have an intimate contact with the Mother, through the heart.

It was our friend Dr. Beena Nayak who conceived the idea that it would be very very helpful for all of us to be reminded what it was like to meet the Mother, in the early days of Auroville when the dream was just being seeded. When she, with Varadharajan and Syamala, took up the work of contacting people here in Auroville who might be willing to share their sweet memories, they found that there were more than they had expected. It was not just a handful, there are more than 50 people among us who had personal contact with the Mother.

The team at Savitri Bhavan was very happy to host some of the “Remembering” sessions, and to welcome the privileged people who agreed to share their intimate, precious and sacred memories. And now we welcome the publication of this collection of transcripts from the recordings made at those gatherings, to spread the sweetness even wider.

We Remember...

(Message for the First World Conference of the Sri Aurobindo Society)

The future of the earth depends on a change of consciousness. The only hope for the future is in a change of man's consciousness and the change is bound to come.

But it is left to men to decide if they will collaborate for this change or if it will have to be enforced upon them by the power of crashing circumstances.

So, wake up and collaborate!

Blessings.

THE MOTHER

August 1964

*

(The Mother gave the following questions for discussion by the Conference participants, and her own answers. The questions are in Navajata's voice and the answers in the Mother's – Recorded.)

NAVAJATA: *How can humanity become one?*

THE MOTHER: By becoming conscious of its origin.

NAVAJATA: *What is the way of making the consciousness of human unity grow in man?*

THE MOTHER: Spiritual education, that is to say an education which gives more importance to the growth of the spirit than to any religious or moral teaching or to the material so-called knowledge.

NAVAJATA: *What is a change of consciousness?*

THE MOTHER: A change of consciousness is equivalent to a new birth, a birth into a higher sphere of existence.

NAVAJATA: *How can a change of consciousness change the life upon earth?*

THE MOTHER: A change in human consciousness will make possible the manifestation upon earth of a higher Force, a purer Light, a more total Truth.

August 1964

*

(It was at this conference that Auroville was announced to the world for the first time.

— The Remembering Team)

“In the Material Realisation of Matrimandir, Her Vision Should Not Be Changed”

Roger Anger

AN INTERVIEW

I have been always reluctant to talk about my contact with the Mother. I cannot communicate that contact to others. It is psychic.

I was not visiting the Ashram for sadhana. My purpose was different. She proposed to me to collaborate in the project of Auroville, for architectural purpose; to transfer Her vision of knowledge of the city into the material field.

It is so difficult for me to achieve this even after 30 or more years — to clarify to people what Her vision is, what She communicated to me, and to implement in the physical manifestation as nearly as possible. This is difficult. It is with a strong conviction that I could explain to others. I try and am still trying.

She told me so many things and everything cannot be explained to everyone. Her vision of Matrimandir is going to be achieved without any change.

It was easy when the Mother was physically present...

In the material realisation of Matrimandir the vision should not be changed. It is not like other things where one can experiment.

We have no right to interpret Her vision. What I have to achieve after the completion of Matrimandir is to transfer as far as possible what She has communicated to me. It is my role and it is a very difficult task, even more difficult today.

Mother told me many times that the past must not compromise the future.

When you consider Matrimandir, it is not a temple. It is the chamber of the Mother, of the Universal Mother. It is like seeing the Mother in Her room.

This has to be clearly understood by all of us, in Auroville and outside Auroville. If we compromise, the strength of Matrimandri will go out. We have to try with all our aspiration not to make it a place of curiosity and tourism.

We have to keep Matrimandir with due care and sanctity according to the vision and guidelines of the Mother.

*The Craftsman of the magic stuff of self
Who labours at his high and difficult plan...
His dreamed magnificence of things to be.
A crown of the architecture of the worlds...*

PART I

“In a Solitude and an Immensity”

Dr. Beena R. Nayak

Down the dusty lanes of memories in time, the one of meeting the Mother shines like a beacon which made me see myself in the mirror of my soul. This memory is timeless, invincible like the golden weft and warp of the woven fabric of Self Imperishable. That momentous meeting with Her can be described best from these lines from Sri Aurobindo’s ‘Savitri’:

*Then suddenly there rose a sacred stir.
Amid the lifeless silence of the Void
In a solitude and an immensity
A sound came quivering like a loved footfall
Heard in the listening spaces of the soul;
A touch perturbed his fibres with delight.
An Influence had approached the mortal range,
A boundless Heart was near his longing heart,
A mystic Form enveloped his earthly shape.
All at her contact broke from silence’ seal;
Spirit and body thrilled identified...*

Book III, 4

Today we are remembering the Mother. The Mother as a child had a dream which She recollected at the conception of Auroville. Some of us were included at the beginning of realization of that conception. I request them to share those moments through their memoirs. We can also remember our meetings with the Mother—in our hearts.

The Mother has said, “Once I have looked upon a soul I never forget. They are linked with me forever.” Forever can only

be through memories, linking moments to past and future through visions, dreams, sounds and other experiences. Today we are gathered together to be in those moments of togetherness with the Mother through living memories in the sound of words, in the meaning, more than words. A Sufi saint, Rabiya Basri prayed to the Lord:

*If I worship thee for fear of hell, burn me in hell.
If I worship thee for hope of Paradise, kick me from Paradise.
But if I worship Thee for Thy own sake only,
Kick me not from Thy everlasting Beauty.*

Being with the Mother, remembering the Mother...

SAVITRI BHAVAN

28-1-2001

Growing up... with the Mother

Aster Patel

It is a very precious moment in Auroville, that brings us together... to be in the Mother's Presence. Knowing the Mother during the early years of Auroville was a rare privilege. But, for me... I don't quite know where to begin! One could share something of the years of growing up with Her in the Ashram—and later participating in Auroville.

In a sense, I was practically born in the Ashram! I started to come here with my parents as a little child of six or seven. That's a time in the life of the Ashram which I think is not known to a lot of people here. For me nothing has been more precious than those early years! So if you would permit me, I will try not to recount memories—but, if at all possible, to share the 'atmosphere' of those years of growing up. And, then, to share how I came to know about Auroville through a work I was given.

It began when the Mother asked my mother to come here with the children, as simple as that—and be here by a certain date. That was in the early forties. There were then no children in the Ashram! One or two had just started to come. I will try not to see that time as an adult seeing it retrospectively. I will say simply, how a young person lived in that atmosphere... in the hope that something gets shared. As we came, the Mother received us like a mother takes up Her own children... in every way.

She gave us all Her time. She saw us several times a day. She talked to us about how to grow up—but gave us a great deal more in 'silence'. That's another story about which one can hardly say anything. We used to ask: How should one do

this? How should one do that? It was amazing—the way She spoke about things the children needed to know and the things they were interested in. She was not talking to grown-ups. She would tell us what to read, what games to play and how to play them. She organized classes first, as there was no school—since there were too few children to have a school. And She wanted to know what we were reading and why we were reading that.

Two things She kept saying, all the time, even when we were eight or nine years old. Every two months, She would remind us, "Be conscious." She said, "Whatever comes up in you, it doesn't matter whether it is good, bad or indifferent, just be aware of what has come. Why it has come? What is this movement—Be conscious." And the second thing She said at the same time was, "Find your Psychic being." Every few weeks, She would say that and She would work on us—that's another dimension of life altogether.

But one can say that there was nothing that She did not deal with: where we lived, how we lived, what we studied, how things were. And as we children grew up, the way She related to us kept on changing too—depending on our problems, interests, the directions our lives were taking and what we needed to learn. There was nothing too 'worldly' for Her not to give an answer to! Above all, She tried to give us a love of beauty and of freedom, born of a psychic feeling.

There were about three hundred people in the Ashram at the time—and there was no school and practically no departments. Three hundred amazing group of people! There were great beings among those three hundred people around Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. At that age, I didn't know in what sense they were great. One only felt the 'presence' of great beings around the central place; in fact one spent one's time in what is now the courtyard around the Samadhi. One practically lived there and hardly in the house the Mother had given us! And there was a powerful atmosphere of the Ashram... with all those great beings. Without knowing who they were, what their achievements were—one knew that they were there for a great cause, something much greater than themselves. They were totally given to that. And they gave of themselves to us as

children with so much love, so much time—it was truly unbelievable.

The 'presence' of the Divine on Earth—the twin presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother was there! And the Mother was moving around and talking to us and looking at the little problems of a growing child—all kinds of things that one went through! The life of the time and the way it filled in with greater things as one grew up were like one continuity. There was no gap. There was no this, that and the other. It was a 'whole' that was wrapped up in love, joy,—an incredible kind of joy—beauty and strength, tremendous strength like something absolute. It was a great 'totality'.

And the Mother was aware of each detail of our life; each detail of a child's growing up. She watched over it, looked after it, corrected what was wrong, told one what was right, scolded, loved, was firm, gave one blows when needed and asked us: "Are you ready for a blow? I will give you one today." She kept telling you what you have to do in life. What is the line of growth and destiny of each child? She would shape a child as a potter worked with clay... and from within outwards. She would tell you clearly, in so many words, over the years, and write to you about it. The external was not unnecessary or to be neglected. That's what I registered always. Not outer for the sake of the 'outer' but from 'within-out' for everything.

One must also share the four Darshan days when one stood before Sri Aurobindo. We don't always speak about Him and yet Mother was always with Sri Aurobindo! These are again the impressions of the child. Days before the Darshan, the compact density of the Ashram courtyard would somehow spill over into all the neighbouring streets. We lived in a house very close to the Ashram at the time—and one felt that the atmosphere was 'charged' as one walked down the streets. The atmosphere would swell up like an orchestra with the approaching Darshan day, when one would stand in a line to go up to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. As one stood in front of Them—Him, particularly—it was His vast, impersonal look that we all know, which we experienced. His gaze did not focus in recognition of anybody, as people went past. He was silent, majestic and absolute. We had the feeling of looking into His eyes and going into some

'beyond.' Somehow as a child what hit one was this sense: "This is It" There was no other language or vocabulary at that age. The word 'absolute' came much later. And by His side would be Mother, but it wasn't the Mother of our daily life whom we met everyday, whom we talked to. This was another 'Being,' when She sat besides Him—totally another being. That was the impression of the two of Them on the Darshan seat, which is indelible.

I must say something about the event of the Suprmental descent in 1956. This sharing will be incomplete without that. The years '54, '55 were somehow very, very charged. One had the feeling that Sri Aurobindo was 'busy' doing something! I had no idea what it was; I was too young. But He was very busy. It's a strange way of putting it but that's how it was. You could say anything to the Mother—so one said: "Sri Aurobindo seems to be very busy. What is He doing?" One could talk to Her like that! She said something but smiled much more because it was no time to put things into words, I guess.

That was a very significant moment as also the earlier one which I didn't mention—December 5, 1950, when Sri Aurobindo left the body. It's amazing how it hit us, even as children. When we woke up one morning and learned that Sri Aurobindo had left the body, for a quick moment it was like the end of the universe. How can anything continue? He is not there. And the power, the sense of something immense, was hanging on us very strongly. The look on the Mother's face at that time was something I will never, ever be able to put away. When one saw Her standing at one of the windows looking over the Samadhi, it was an unbelievable sight. She looked so 'stricken'—though this is not the correct word to use. It was days and months later that She initiated tremendous activity in the external field—from '51 onwards.

Well, one grew up, as one must! I wasn't here when Auroville started. I was studying in Paris at that time and was about to finish the work I was doing. Sometime in '68, I had heard accounts of the beautiful foundation ceremony of Auroville and that was all. In '69, I asked Mother, "I am finishing my work and coming back. What should I do when I return?" It was very interesting because I guess all my life in Auroville has been

marked by what followed. She said, "As soon as you have finished your studies, you will know about it, I will let you know. I will let you know when you are still in Paris." Then I got a letter from Her saying that the United Nations was observing its 25th anniversary by having a World Youth Assembly. I was at that time in the category of university youth! Mother wanted me to attend that and represent Auroville and Ashram. I was informed that Janet, who is here, would be present with a lot of material from Auroville. There were official delegations from the countries and one couldn't participate as individuals. It was an interesting situation but it was somehow worked out. That was Her first move of linking me with Auroville. As soon as I came back, She said, "Well, that's your work. That's your indication." And then, that was the time when She gave one of Her almost last interviews in early '70s. And She spoke at length of what the work should be, how one should do it, etc. There was one sentence She had used in that long interview which I think is of significance to all of us here. It is about the work of India—and Auroville being here—which is significant. She said, "India represents the Life Divine. And it is that which has to be shown in life, in action and in the manner of being," adding, "India is open to the New Forces that wish to manifest." This was shortly before She left the body.

With this, I would like to thank the organisers for giving one an occasion to re-live something of one's deepest experience.

Our Mother

Shyam Sunder

My association with Auroville has been from the very beginning. In fact there was a time when Auroville was to be started in 1965, and somehow or the other, I happened to be associated with it from the first day that the idea of Auroville was given by Mother to the world. But my association with Mother started still earlier although not so early as Aster's. My first darshan of Mother was in 1949. It was in February 1949, and next month—after a few days—it will be 52 years since I saw her first. I was a youth of 22 at that time and I do not remember having seen even Mother's photo before I came here but once I was here a relationship started growing between her and me.

In those days Mother used to come every morning about sunrise to the balcony. That was my first darshan of her and the figure resembled a face I happened to see sometimes at Calcutta. Not many times, just two or three times, nor have I any idea of what it was or what it indicated. But the moment I saw her at the balcony, the magnet started working.

I don't think I missed any balcony darshan of Mother whenever I was in Pondy. It was a good thing to start the day with: after the morning walk on the seashore to come and see a goddess arriving with the dawn, the first rays of the sun falling on her face. Sometimes it would be difficult to say who was more radiant, the sun or the Mother Goddess before me. I was a young boy, a visitor: the sadhaks and inmates would be there under the balcony and I used to stand quite at the back,—but it didn't matter, it is not simply my experience, I think it is the experience of everyone that Mother looked into his eyes wherever he stood; everyone felt satisfied that he was attended

to by Mother. And then slowly, when the time was up, Mother would retrace her steps back to her chamber, but still the aura would be there on the street and it was not easy to leave the place. Of course each one would leave slowly, I also, and the next morning I would again be there.

Not only that, in those days Mother used to give darshan several times in the Ashram during the day. Once she was coming in the morning between ten and eleven,—it was called vegetable darshan. Some baskets of vegetable which would be used in the Ashram kitchen were brought before Mother and she would bless them with her gaze. And a few persons would be standing there in front of her to receive her gracious look and blessings.

Then one could see her again when she would go to the tennis ground. That was another fine opportunity for her darshan. It was not meant to be a darshan for people; she would just come down, have the band put on her wrist—Pranab would do that—and walk to her car, but sitting in the car she would again cast a glance around and I would have the feeling that she looked at and blessed me.

Then when she would return from the play ground that would be another opportunity to stand outside and have her darshan when she came out.

Finally, at night there would be a meditation. There was no fixed time, it would be anytime after nine, sometimes ten, sometimes eleven. People would get mats from Haradhan and they would be sitting or lying stretched on mats in the courtyard. Although I was an early sleeper from my young days, I used to attend that meditation. Of course once I overslept on the mat—I had missed Haradhan's voice “Mother comes”—and woke up only after the meditation was over.

Now, what is it that made me go for Mother's darshan on all those occasions?

Was it because I was just attracted by her? Or because of my *sanskara* that the darshan of a divine person is always helpful for one's growth or prosperity? Or because I had nothing else to do in the day? I was just a visitor coming for one or two weeks, a few times a year.

There is one other possibility: something deep within my being was being worked upon by Mother. For Mother's function

in her embodiment on earth was to work on the inner being of each person who came into contact with her and to take that person through the psychic contact to the ultimate aim which is union with the Divine.

At the balcony darshan in the morning, I would say, Mother was 'a parable of dawn'. That freshness and that urge of dawn for a new churning, for a new chapter, that went on the whole day and the whole night, I could feel them after all those meditations.

It is a beautiful memory, a very precious one. For what reason do I remember it? For that also there can be several alternatives. But if I remember her for what she gave me, if I am grateful to her for what she has done for me, if I still look forward to what she continues to do for me, I think, I did not waste her time by making her look at me on all those different occasions.

When I would go back to Calcutta,—it was more than fifteen years after February 1949 that I settled down in the Ashram—her guidance was there always, her protection was there always with me.

Here I wish to make one thing clear. During the course of my visits these fifteen years the spoken words between Mother and me were hardly half a dozen sentences. I am speaking of the total number of the sentences during those years. On my first visit when I went to Mother for pranam the day I was to go back—in those times when one went back, one could go to her for pranam—she just asked me, "Are you going?" After that for some years no words were spoken.

Then how did her guidance and her protection work? That, I think, every child of Mother knows.

Is it a miracle? I don't believe in miracles like that. For her miracles were normal. It is only when we open to her that the miracle happens and once we call it a miracle, I would say, we underestimate her for miracles are her normal action.

After settling in the Ashram I was doing miscellaneous work coming to me through others from Mother, and my correspondence with Mother started in 1968 or so. Before that I used to go to Mother on my birthday. Then a time came when I was received by her daily. All that was also in silence. The total number of spoken sentences during those visits would not be,

I would say, more than a dozen.

Although I was associated with Auroville work from the beginning, as I have already said, it was all through intermediaries. It was only in 1970 end that a direct contact regarding Auroville grew between Mother and me on the physical level when I asked questions and she answered.

In February 1971 Mother sent me a word to see her the next morning. From then on I was charged with the Auroville work. From February 1971 until May 1973 all the different problems of Auroville, the different matters Aurovilians wanted to communicate to Mother, also their personal questions, and things that I had to ask Mother regarding Auroville were put up by me before Mother daily. It was an interesting experience that reminds me of the Mahasaraswati aspect of Mother, of her patience, of her endurance, of her love for her children.

No imperfection of ours escaped her notice, and still she would point it out with so much love that we sometimes over estimated ourselves. At least for myself I can say that sometimes I felt that she loved me for something special in me. That may be the experience of most of us, her children. For Auroville she had the utmost love and great hopes for it. Auroville was getting most of her attention, so much so that sometimes some people would be jealous of me for while they were being pushed out — 'Mother is in a hurry...please don't take time' — I was never brushed aside. Well, the thing went on, and as I have said, her Mahasaraswati aspect was a lesson that I should never forget.

Before parting today I would say that Mother laid great emphasis on the construction of Matrimandir. This was the very first thing I was expected to report to Mother daily; what was the work done at Matrimandir the previous day and what was the next step. Similarly there were other things, and in a way all things were important, nothing small, nothing big, but Matrimandir had her special attention and was first thing spoken of, Matrimandir being the soul, the centre of Auroville for which we all should collaborate. In those days everyone from the community was expected to work there at least once a week. Well, it was a labour of love, of joy; it had an atmosphere in which, I remember, we all from Auroville joined.

Similarly for other activities also at Auroville. And whenever

Mother was told of an instance of collaboration, she was particularly happy.

And now when so many problems arise, as they are bound to arise, I still feel Mother is there, Mother is in Auroville, and we have great hope. When she entrusted me with the work of Auroville she said that it was a very difficult task with many problems, but I should put each matter before her, and in all her humility she said she would try to help me.

Well, when she was in her physical body, she guided, protected and carried us through. And now when she is no more physically with us, those who carry her emanation with them, and all who are open to her, do get her protection.

That is all for today.

3

“She Always Brought Us Back to Unity”

Bhagawandas (Jean Pierre)

It is a great privilege to meet the Mother at personal level. Three of us from Aspiration—Alain, myself and Cristof—used to meet Mother every week and ask her guidance on many questions at individual, social and spiritual levels. To meet her as a member of our collective life is something exhilarating. That experience is very difficult to put into words, but I will try.

It was so incredible to observe how Mother tackled many things in a simple way. She keenly understood the problems we were explaining to her, and was teaching us how to face and overcome the difficulties—the difficulties were complex, both at material and spiritual levels.

She made us feel completely relaxed and good and comfortable. She always brought us back to unity by telling us how to face the problems and live and work together. She influenced us with her deep knowledge and love! Our conversation touched many things including animals like dogs and cats. She spent more than 15 minutes to explain to us, on how we should relate ourselves with these creatures, how we should be conscious and good in such a way that the animal too feels good to be with us. This still holds relevance to me even though so many years have passed since. When we asked her questions—we were putting so many questions to her—in her reply, She was going from one level of consciousness to another with such a facility, that the whole communication was integral (at all levels: emotional, psychic and other levels).

One day after some conversation, she said that we should take up, “What is it to be a true Aurovilian?” For us it was a big topic, it was a great mystery—how to be a true Aurovilian and

who a true Aurovillian is. We said, "To be one with the Divine—at the service of the Divine." That was our first answer. She was happy and said "Good, good, good." Then she said, "We should take up the other conditions in the next interview. Before we met her the next time, she had already worked out something.

It was incredible how she used to tackle Auroville Life without rejecting anything that is essential in Life; how to live and rise from the lowest level to the highest level. She even spoke on how manual work is important. Nothing needs to be barred by force; you should rise in your consciousness so that it falls off by itself: that is what I understood. -

Though we were three, we were also representing the collectivity. So I wanted to tape the conversation. When I first put the tape record before her, she was not so inclined. I explained to her that it is for the community listening—then she said O.K. After the interview we used to go directly to Aspiration Cafeteria where people used to assemble. We used to play the tape and then have a collective meditation. To me, the Auroville life started from that time.

About the present: I feel that the people who come now,—though they had no physical touch of Mother—have inner maturity. With the spiritual labour of Mother and Sri Aurobindo in the Earth consciousness, the younger generation is able to do more quickly and easily what was hard for us.

We have many differences in our outlook on things and life etc., but we should not have division. We are all complementary. So many people are coming here with a full hope for its realisation. We have to welcome them as our brothers and sisters and share our experience. This is a beautiful possibility for Auroville, a real fraternity.

Aspiration

Cristof

When we came to live in Aspiration, we were babies, and we still are babies.

But like babies, we had such faith in our Mother, in Her new creation: everything was going to change, today, or maybe tomorrow... From the red earth a new world would arise, because "All's miracle here and can by miracle change."

After some time, we felt the need to come closer to Her, I mean physically, and to put before Her the problems, day to day problems that we had. I wrote to Her and She agreed to see the three of us, Alain, Jean Pierre (Bhagawan Das) and myself, once a week on Tuesdays at three o'clock in the afternoon.

Most of the time we were rather lightly dressed, working in the garden planting trees, as it was just the beginning of Aspiration in the desert. But for that wonderful meeting, we put on our best dress—like today I have put on my beautiful white shirt. On that day, we were really trying to be at our best—not only outwardly! We were making effort to be in touch with something deeper within us.

The first time when we went to see Mother, it was difficult to speak. We had prepared some questions and so we put the questions before Her. I think the main problem we had in the beginning was how to do practical work and at the same time do the inner discovery—do the inner work. That was the problem for us, it was not easy. We asked Her this question and She answered. She said: "Actually the ideal would have been if the inner discovery had been made before coming here." But of course She didn't stop at that. She didn't send us back home, because our home was here.

I came in 1967 for the first time to see my mother. And I met Mother. When I went back to France, it was a hard time for me because life away from Mother was so strange and at times so painful. So, in 1969 I came back and just before leaving—I had my ticket to return to France—I told Mother: "Well, I don't feel like going back." At that time it was so simple. She told me, "You can stay as long as you like." So I am still here, you see. At that time it was very very simple with Mother, no complications: you want to stay, you stay; if the aspiration is there, you stay with me.

Merci, Mère.

*In all who have risen to a greater Life,
A voice of unborn things whispers to the ear,
To their eyes visited by some high sunlight
Aspiration shows the image of a crown:...*

My Future Was Sanctioned and Sealed by Her

Ananda Reddy

My association with Auroville began with the Foundation Ceremony on 28th February 1968 with my participation in it representing Liberia. In fact when I held the flag of Liberia I didn't even know where it was! However, that was perhaps the seed sown in me. Around that time, if I remember correctly, Roger and a couple of others had come to the Ashram school, which I had joined in 1958, and spoken to the students about the plans of building the Matrimandir—the soul of the city to be. He then invited the students to submit some drawings for the Matrimandir. And, quite in an Indian tradition, I had drawn a lotus design—a hundred petalled lotus as the form of Matrimandir. [Remarkably, the final design approved for Matrimandir is of lotus form (with four inner and twelve outer petals).] That's how my contact with Auroville began.

When I had completed the Ashram education in 1969, I had to choose the area of my work, for I had decided to do some work remaining in Pondicherry only. In those days there was absolutely no difference between the Ashram and Auroville, at least in my mind. As long as it was the Mother who was physically and spiritually guiding Auroville, it was for me an extension of the Ashram. But it was a question of joining some experiment that was absolutely new in conception and also something that was just starting. It had its own challenges but it would be a greater adventure. The Ashram was already something concrete in form and crystallized. Here was a new form of the Mother's dream—Auroville! I had come on a survey-

trip to Aspiration—those days there were not too many choices too—and Auroville, with its red earth and its open green fields beckoned me, as if, to open myself to a new future—a future that would be unravelled for me by the Mother herself. Did not the Mother write to me once that as I go forward my future would be revealed to me? So, I said to myself: "This is where I belong!"

In fact, couple of years back, when I had a chance to go to America for higher studies, I had written to the Mother about wanting to join a college in the USA. She had given me clear enough indications in the letter that I should not be going to the States and then she added that if I wanted I could belong to the new world that is descending and that I should prepare myself for it. It was in the beginning of 1969. As the aspiration to belong to the new world was burning in me since the time the Mother wrote to me about the new world, Auroville had become for me, on the physical level, the manifesting form of that new consciousness and the new world.

I went to the Mother, it was sometime in 1970. When she asked me what I had decided about the place of my work, I told her: "Mother, I would like to join Auroville." The Mother then closed her eyes and withdrew for a while. When she opened her eyes she pierced my being with her look and said, with a benign smile, "Bien!" It was as if she had seen my place in the gamut of a whole new world that was taking a concrete shape and thus confirmed my joining Auroville.

Then she asked me, (the whole conversation was in French) "Do you know André?" I replied in the positive. Then she said, "Go to André, he will tell you about the work." The place of my work was approved by the Mother but the details of the work to be done would be decided by André-da. So, from the Mother's room I straight walked across to André-da's room—André-da, who all of you know is the Mother's son. I just walked from one room to the other in a daze, as it were. There was an overwhelming joy and at the same time a calmness. Another door to the future was opened: my future was sanctioned and sealed by her—the very creator of Auroville, the very epicentre of the new world to which I wanted to belong so very ardently!

After some discussion, André-da said, "We need at present a

liaison between the Ashram and Auroville. I think you can take up that work of being a liaison." I then asked him a question, I still remember it vividly, "In such a work I may have to report to the Mother what I find incorrect at Auroville or the Ashram. But I do not like to make a judgement on any individual. What should I do in such a situation?" He said—I do not remember the exact words—that if I took it up as the Mother's work there would be no reporting against anyone but acting in the best spirit for the sake of work.

I accepted the liaison assignment but soon I had to go to Hyderabad for some work with my father Madhusudan Reddy whom some of the Aurovilians sitting here would know. He was a member of the Auroville Governing Board in 1995-96. You may be interested to know that way back in 1969-70, my father was given to start a university in Auroville. The Mother had asked him to come to Auroville to start a university here. So I was a bit excited and I wrote to the Mother that, apart from what André-da gave me, if I could work with my father at Auroville University. I had sent the letter to the Mother through André-da. After long many months André-da replied, "No, on the contrary Mother is asking you to come to Auroville and work with the children here." Another direction was opened up for my work!

So I first came in 1970, to attend the opening ceremony of the Aspiration School. It was a brand new hut—that was to be the school for a long time to come. I was thrilled thinking that I was to begin from the beginning. The hut was to be the place of my adventure in education. The VIPs who had come from the Ashram had brought the Mother's blessings and the message about the languages that were to be taught in Aspiration School. There were a handful of students, from different parts of the world and the country!

But when do I come to live in Auroville? I waited eagerly for the day and the auspicious time! Well, it soon came. It was the 1st January 1971. I still remember that because for the new year, 1971, the Mother had given a calendar with the message: "Blessed are those who take a leap into the future." And it was with that calendar in my hand that I had walked to my hut at Aspiration from the main road on the 1st January, 1971! The

future was the present—I had begun to live it! What a glory and bliss was it to be able to participate in her dream, to be young was to be in the very heaven. I was the very first Ashram school student to have come out to live in Auroville premises and I was very proud of that. And that too my stay was sanctioned by the Mother herself! In one of the letters I had sent to the Mother, through Purnaprema, the Mother's grand daughter, I was instructed by the Mother to work with Normanda who was then in charge of the Aspiration School.

Slowly, as days passed by, I started working out a program, a syllabus and wrote about all that to the Mother. I took quite many directions from her regarding the system that was to be developed at Aspiration School. For this occasion I have brought two of the letters. They have interesting guidelines for those who are in the field of education. The first one is the letter giving us an idea of how we used to run the school in those days. Here I read out from my letter to the Mother:

Ma, we have divided the Aspiration School students into three groups. Children below five years, children between five to eight years who through play and art are introduced to languages and mathematics and the third section children are above eight years. And these students, who number about 60, are divided into eight groups according to their capacities of comprehension and self-expression. And these groups are named Aspiration, Boldness, Clarity, Devotion, Enthusiasm, Friendship, Goodness, Harmony and they have a fixed time table for the entire week.

I gave a few more details. The first question I put to her was: "Do you approve of the system? If you do so, do you want us to continue for a further length of time, say till the end of this year?" And the second question was: "Do you feel now that we should attempt a new system which would be more in line with Auroville because the present one is only an improvement of a 'teacher-teaching-a-subject' method? Indicate to us the concrete steps towards the new system of education. Pray guide us closely at every step." This letter is dated March 16, 1972. And the Mother's approval was for the first one, for a regular

teaching. She said, "Yes. It has my full approval." And for the second one,— whether we should start on some new experiment,— she said a blunt "No." May be the time had not yet come for such a new step to be taken.

Like that I used to ask her for every little detail—especially when I had started the physical education programme at Aspiration. I did it absolutely in line with the Ashram school as I was an ex-student of the school.

So my experience at Auroville has been solely in the field of education. I felt very responsible for my work in the administration of the school because we, some of us selected by the Mother, like Shraddhavan, Shantiben and Deepshikha and others, were attempting something new in the field of education. I had also asked the Mother on some occasion, the meaning of the Last School and the connection that was between the Ashram school and Auroville. I do not now remember her answer.

The second document gives details of the weekly programme. Here it is...the big schedule containing the Mother's signature or rather signatures! The Mother signed twice on it: once on the left side and a second time on the right side of the document. I don't know to whom I should pass it on, but I am sure there must be some Auroville Archives, where I could give this thing if it is kept safely and with due reverence.

Well, I asked the Mother for her guidance in every little bit—even if we had to go with students and spend a day in the inviting ravines that were strewn in Auroville land. Had we not done so, how could we have been saved on the night of our camping on an island of the second river—on the way to Cuddalore? The children and we had camped on a small island and at night there was a rising of the river water almost drowning us when we were asleep!

Well, as I was feeling more and more responsible for the children, I felt the need to be more in contact with her directly. Subsequently I asked the Mother if I could come and see her once a month. She agreed to it and till March, 1973, I went to her once a month.

I remember the last message she had given me regarding my own work. As there were some major changes in the Aspiration

School, I had asked the Mother if I should continue with the work or if she had any other work for me in her mind. The Mother replied in the letter: "Continue to do the work you are doing."

Since those days many things have changed in the Aspiration School as well as in Auroville but I seem to have continued with my teaching work, wherever it may be. In fact I have now returned to Auroville to teach once again, though not children but adults, some of them may be the ones who have grown up since 1971! What André-da had asked me to do, may be I am doing it now in the right spirit—of being a liaison between the Ashram and Auroville. At the same time, I have kept up my promise given to the Mother—to continue to teach. Subjects have changed, students have changed, place has changed but my teaching continues, for that seems to be my sadhana, my path to the Mother's consciousness!

*Lo, we have looked upon the face of God,
Our life has opened with divinity.*

6

“These, You Have to Find within Yourself”

Frederick

When I was asked to participate here I had some hesitation. I don't know where it comes from. I read in Tara's book, 'Growing up with the Mother', where the Mother has been quoted as saying, "You should take the past like a trampoline to help you leap towards the future." But there is a hesitation in me about recalling and remembering and getting trapped in memory. But at the same time I think, seeing again so many people who I have lost contact with and the very fact that I am sitting next to Shyamsundar, it maybe a direction towards the future. I also think of Navajata, who many of you don't know. In many troubled phases of Auroville we were lodged in opposite directions and seemed to be fighting each other. And a few years ago I had a very strong experience that the time had come for healing, for working towards each other, to move forward.

One can open oneself to the Presence of the Mother by recalling the physical memories. Of the memories that I have (besides a few concerning my very personal life in the Ashram) some are: being involved in the preparation for the foundation stone laying and being given the charge of building the first pukka house in Auroville. I think that might be of some interest.

I had brought some money to the Mother and She had asked me to be a trustee of that money. Then She said I should use that money to build a permanent house to show to the world that "We are here for good". And that was like a responsibility to demonstrate the permanence of Auroville.

I feel that the difference between the Ashram and the Auroville

might have been brought about due to our ignorance and blindness. And often, when I read in 'The Agenda' what was actually going on, I feel a deep regret that I didn't understand at that time. [The Agenda is a record of Mother's talks and writings preserved by Satprem, a disciple, and published some years after the Mother's departure. It contains Mother's observations, instructions and announcements on Auroville.] But still I feel that there is a fundamental difference between the Ashram and Auroville, which could actually be an enriching experience instead of a cause of fighting and conflict. And it demonstrated itself to me in my correspondence with the Mother (when I was still living in the Ashram) on questions about my life in the Ashram, my children, their education, the problems there and my work in Auroville. It was very marked that, to the questions relating to my life in the Ashram, the Mother very carefully and very precisely answered but the moment I touched on aspects of Auroville, She said, "These, you have to find within yourself"—as if somehow She relied on our capacity in Auroville to call Her guidance from within. And I do feel that somehow we can't duplicate, we can't replicate, we can't just transport messages which were given to the Ashram and transport them to here. Even messages which might have been given in the early times of Auroville, we cannot just repeat them like this. I feel that She is continuously, even now, trying to open us up, so that we can feel Her guidance for our next step in Auroville.

I would like to recall Her action during the foundation stone laying of Auroville on the 28th February, when the charter and the message to Auroville were played. We had been living out here in a small hut we had built. A lot of people gathered, at the place where the Amphitheatre now is, and around 9.30 am I think, Shyamsundar might know the exact time, suddenly a Silence came down on us and then there was a live transmission of the Mother's voice to that place. And that was of such tremendous impact, the birth of a New World, that everybody felt like some meteor had struck this piece of Earth. We might not have been ready at that very moment to receive within all that came down. The next day I was alone out there, it was just a barren area with a lot of debris but still something had

penetrated. The Mother was very much concerned about the physical condition in Auroville. And whenever I saw Her with the children She would ask me, "What is happening? How is it going?" She saw once a photo of the Urn, after a monsoon rain with water around it like a lake. The Urn was just sticking out and She was extremely concerned and wanted to know the exact details of the foundation of the Urn so that nothing should really physically, permanently damage the place where Her dream was to be manifested.

I would very much like—maybe as a phase of healing—that the organizers who did this beautiful meeting may ask the people who in that troubled time of Auroville were lodged in different camps to come and look together at how to move on and call the Mother's Presence and Force for the next step into the future.

21-2-68

The reminiscenses will
be short.

I came to India to meet Sri Aurobindo.
I remained in India to live with Sri Aurobindo.
When he left his body, I continued to live here
in order to do his work which is, by serving
the Truth and enlightening mankind,
to hasten the rule of the Divine's
Love upon earth.

—

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THE MOTHER

For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!

SRI AUROBINDO

“Tomorrow Morning, Sunrise”

Chamanlal Gupta

It is indeed a blessing to be remembering and thinking of the Mother during this week of Auroville's birthday. This occasion is sandwiched, very appropriately, between Her own birthday and the birthday of Auroville. This is a beautiful place and the Mother loved beauty very much. I think that, from somewhere She is watching over us happily.

Starting in early fifties—I first time came here in 1954—I had interactions with the Mother at three levels: first, personally; second, in regard to the work at the Ashram; and third, in regard to work at Auroville. I will limit myself to the last.

Firstly, I must submit that when we remember the Mother—who is so much dear and near to us—one cannot help, however one may try, but to speak a little bit about oneself as well. Though this is not very desirable, it is unavoidable. Secondly, I'm speaking from memory and I may not be able to repeat exactly the words She said. Also some of it was heard through others, who took my letters. So kindly excuse me for this.

I decided to settle in the Ashram in 1967 but I didn't know where it would be—in Ashram, Auroville or elsewhere. I wrote to the Mother that I was coming to the end of my research studies and would like to come to Her but that I had no idea when and where and how. “Should I come to Auroville?” As for staying in Auroville—according to Navajataji's scheme, one had to book a land here. For that I needed money but I didn't have a penny because, every month, whatever I saved, I used to send to the Mother. She replied: “Not necessary for you to stay at Auroville but you can do work there.” I finally came in December 1967 and was asked to assist Khirod, Head of Building Service

in the Ashram. It was in this department that the Foundation Urn for Auroville was made.

Sometime in 1966 or 1967 beginning, Roger's design team came and they wanted to know what was happening in the field of "Building and Town Planning" in India. As I came from Central Building Research Institute, it was proposed that they should visit our Institute and Roger wanted me to go with him. I told the Mother that I had come after three years and unless She wanted, I didn't want to go, and also that all arrangements were made: I had phoned the Director of my Institute to receive Roger's team officially, even a lunch would be hosted and they will be received appropriately and Sri Aurobindo Study Centre at Roorkee would look after their stay and other arrangements. It is to be seen here how wonderfully the Mother accommodated so many considerations. She told me that it was not necessary for me to go but still I should talk to Roger. She was telling me—without telling that in many words, to convince Roger that it was not necessary for me to go—because Roger was going with a research team and it wouldn't be nice to him if he felt uneasy at our Institute. I managed to convince Roger that it was not necessary for me to go. I tell this incident particularly because I think She gave a lot of stress on harmony which is very important. We tend to sometimes forget this but I think it is very important.

When we started working in Auroville in 1971, I decided that we should set up a meteorological station because if you have to build a town—for agriculture, drainage, architecture and energy in fact for everything—you would need meteorological data for at least five years. But we did not have a penny. Somebody gave us two thousand five hundred rupees and Piero designed the first meteorological station. He had estimated so accurately—since we had limited funds—that at the end of construction there were only three hollow blocks left! But then the Government of India required payments for instruments and as there was no electricity some of them were specially designed to work without electricity. We needed still more money. Finally, Janet who is here still, brought us some UNESCO gift coupons and we moved ahead.

On February 15, 1972, the instruments arrived and we started

installing them. On 28th February, which was Auroville's birthday in Sri Aurobindo's centenary year, I went to the Ashram at 4 o'clock and told Champaklal "It is just finished; please tell Mother that everything is ready." She replied: "Tomorrow morning, Sunrise." Feb 29, 1972 was the anniversary day of Supramental descent in Sri Aurobindo's centenary year and She wanted it to start at sunrise time on that day. If I had spoken one percent lie, I would have been caught! I wanted to tell this incident to stress that one had to be very precise with the Mother; there was no fooling around. She was the real Executive Director. Thus was started the first meteorological station and it recorded the first professional scientific data in Auroville. Unfortunately for 30 years it was the only professional data available. Auroville is now in the process of collecting data on water, soil etc., slowly, in three or four year's time these will come up.

I remember that the Mother was very clear that we should be absolutely discreet and careful in our pronouncements. And She used very strong words to explain it to me. We had to go and meet the town planning authorities in Madras. We were on agricultural land, we had no town council, we had taken nobody's permission and this was not how a town was started. But then if we had taken all those things we would never have started. The Government officer I had to see was very prejudiced and I had no chance to see the Mother prior to that because I had been informed at 10.45 pm that I had to go the next day early morning.

When we went there he railed at me: "You are all stupid people; you have selected such a barren land, taken no permission, you are illegal, unlawful and this is not permitted."

I thought, "My god, we are in trouble."

"Why hasn't Shyamsundar come? Why have you come?"

I said Shyamsundar was ill.

"No."

"Anyone could fall ill, even you could," I pointed out.

"Why are you making this town?" he asked.

"You didn't come to the opening?" I queried.

"No, nobody invited me."

He was angry because nobody invited him for the opening ceremony of Auroville.

I said, "We are raw, new, we don't know everything. Nobody knows all the laws. Please tell us what we can do. If we have done a mistake, we will apologise and I will ask Shyamsundar to write to you. But please don't get angry."

When I returned from that meeting I thought it was important enough to report to the Mother and so I went and reported to Her. She asked everything in great detail: "What did he ask? What did you answer?" And then She said, "One has to be very very careful in what one speaks because I do not want to jeopardize the future of Auroville at any cost."

Many of our people say: "We belong to nobody in particular; we are international; we obey no laws." The Government officers don't like all this. And this really brought home to me, how careful the Mother was as to what one speaks. I think this still applies to us very much, particularly when we are dealing with people who are not directly involved in the project. We have to be extremely careful about what we say.

Afterwards, in 1972, when Sri Aurobindo Society, which was the governing body of Auroville, invited a UN expert, one Prof. Vernon Newcombe (who still comes here and has brought lot of money to Auroville) for helping us in the planning of Auroville. But when he came here, it was like Anglo-French war once again as he was an Englishman and Roger was French. And I in between, because I was asked by Mother to look after him, to be his counterpart. We had lots and lots of trouble. The first trouble was because I was an Ashramite. Aurovilians thought why I was working for Auroville, and Ashramites thought why I was working in Auroville when I had so much work at Ashram. Finally I got fed up and I wrote to the Mother: "I do not know what you have been told about me. You know I work half time in Ashram school; if you want I will make myself free. It will help me if you please write that you want me to do this work. I am very sorry to bother you and take your time." You know there was always a clash in one's mind. One wanted Mother's direct reply and orders but at the same time one was very careful not to increase Her work too much. She was the first one to get up and last one to sleep and it's none of our business to be bothering Her about every small thing; She wouldn't say anything because She was the Mother but it was

not nice to over-burden Her. She replied to me on a piece of paper, “Chamanlal, I want you to do this work.” She made it very clear: it was not a question of working for Ashram or Auroville but for Her.

So we proceeded merrily with Prof. Newcombe in spite of all the Anglo-French skirmishes. On the final day when the Professor was leaving, he suddenly decided that he wanted five zones instead of four as it was in the sketch made by the Mother. And five happened to be the number signifying ‘Realization’ and also the total number of petals in ‘Auroville Flower’.

So I went to the Mother and said: “This gentleman is talking of five zones now. I don’t know what to do!” She said: “Well I am not an architect or an engineer. I wrote what I saw. Now it is up to you people to realize that.” So when I told that we had to realize the plan the Mother had drawn, the Professor said: “If She had done everything what am I to do?” I said, “You have to help us do it.” But he was a UN man and not a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. However, the next day, we all went to the Mother and he had taken the flower of Auroville. It was in April, 1972. As Mother was looking at that flower, very intently, he said: “Mother, I want to put this flower in Auroville, because this means the realization of Auroville. And there should be five zones, not four.” And Mother was not replying. Monsieur André, Mother’s son, thought that She was not hearing and was whispering into the Mother’s ear: “Mama, Mama.” But She was hearing. She suddenly looked up and said: “I will not put this flower in Auroville till Matrimandir is realized.” “I have written what I saw; now it is for you to realize,” She added.

She didn’t answer directly or contradict Prof. Newcombe and actually there are five zones, the Matrimandir zone,—at the centre—is the fifth one. She was very precise, very flexible but at the same time, very firm. And later on after we had had lots of fights— he became a supporter. When Sri Aurobindo’s Centenary concert was given by Yehudi Menuhin and Ravi Shankar in London, he came from his university to attend and he had become our friend. The initial difficulties with him were partly our fault; we were not used to receiving UN officials—they need a secretary, a car with a driver etc. But anyway it worked out quite well in the end.

Then came up the question of going to the United Nations conference in Stockholm. I felt, as this was the first United Nation's Conference and since the Mother had founded Auroville town, we should attend. Though I did not say it in that many words it was decided that Roger and I would go to this conference. I knew the Mother was very short of money at that time because She had told me: "I will give you some money next year." She had explained: "When Sri Aurobindo's centenary comes I will get some money and I will give you some but just now you manage." "Is it alright?" She had asked and I said, "Yes, it's alright."

So here She was spending money for us to go to Stockholm and I knew She did not like conferences. When Ruud was to go to Sri Aurobindo's centenary conference in Delhi, She had said: "What? I thought he had work in Matrimandir." So he didn't go. When I went to Her to take leave, I was asking without asking,—you know, this we can do with our Mother, not with a spiritual master, because we were like little children, we didn't know really—"Is it alright to go?" (See, are you willing to spend all this money?) She took my hands in Hers and just kept on caressing them and the impression She gave me was: it's too late; just go and enjoy yourself. She did not speak one word—just looking amused—and it was done.

There are so many little incidents where one felt that She was very careful about harmony, about receptivity, about flexibility and about discretion in speaking about Auroville.

Last thing, which I wish to tell, is rather poignant. I was one of the two persons allowed to go to Her on my birthday in 1973. We at that time never thought that She might depart. Even if the thought came, we just brushed it aside. It was blasphemous. Although She did what She had to do,—as usual, giving flowers, smiling, writing cards, everything—I knew on seeing Her that something was not alright...

Then I had to go to Delhi, as 'Man and Bio-sphere' (MAB) project had started and we were looking for funds. (Finally it has come now, through the 'Asia Urbs' program which is really an extension of Man and Bio-sphere program.) When I was in Delhi, again the same thing: government officers, Planning Commission—big questions, big people, and I don't have

answers. Chairman of Environmental Committee in Planning Commission asked me: “Why have you come here?”

I said: “We are building a city.”

“No chance, there is no chance for the city under MAB.”

I said, “How can you tell me that? You may be a big man but you cannot tell that; The Mother has said that the city will be built—and it’s already built somewhere; how can you tell that? You give money or you don’t give money, but why are you telling like this?” Then he softened down.

So many people said, “No chance.” I said, “Human beings cannot say this. You can say, ‘very little chance’ but you cannot say, ‘no chance’. That’s not possible. How can you say ‘no chance?’” Then I was trying to concentrate on the Mother to get Her answer as to what to say. Particularly,—I don’t say in meditation—but in regard to work, the Mother did make Her Presence felt. One could feel Her Presence and get an answer. There was no time to write to Her; and I was not feeling anything. I was feeling as if there was some diffusion, I could not contact Her. So, I wrote a letter saying that it was too important a matter for me to decide and I could not feel, get Her Presence. Was it something different? Or, what was it?” Shyamsundar still remembers that letter. It was May, 1973, the Mother was already withdrawing. So, this was very poignant. I would say, to all those who had worked with Her, who were in contact with Her, She had started giving small indications, which of course as good children we did not accept. How could we ever think that She would leave!

I think this is all I have to say about Mother, mainly in relation to my work in Auroville. Thank you.

*Imparting to our struggling world the Light
They breathed like spirits from Time’s dull yoke released,
Comrades and vessels of the cosmic Force,
Using a natural mastery like the sun’s:
Their speech, their silence was a help to earth.*

“I Am Here”

Santosh Malik

In 1959, Prem, my husband was posted in Madras and we started coming to the Ashram. We just came like visitors but having met some very senior people, Prem was very keen to come and settle down. But we just kept visiting and it took about nine years to finally come to the Ashram. When I came—to tell you very frankly—I had no such experience, as some people have had, of seeing and hearing the Mother in a vision. I came with an open mind, without negative feelings, and the Mother started working on me.

The first time when I went to see Her with Prem it was at the Interview Room. And people used to go to Her in the afternoon. I still remember the dress She was wearing, and what I told Her. I said: “Mother, I don’t know anything about You but I want to know; please open myself for Your force and explain what You are”;—which She started doing right there. Then we went back to Calcutta and started reading books about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. We came for the inauguration of Auroville in February 1968 and in May we returned finally. Obviously it seemed I came because Prem came but really it was not so. As Prem told me much later, the Mother was using different forces with me and him. For example (we used to go together to the Mother), She would look at me in a very compassionate way and at Prem with a powerful look giving all the force necessary for his work. I could feel that there was something happening to me and it was due to that I decided to stay in the Ashram.

When we came to Pondicherry, we had to start some pattern of life. We offered whatever we had with us to the Mother but

She said, "No, you keep this as my trust and live your own way of life." However, I was a little apprehensive. I thought: "May be we can't live with these investments alone." So we wrote another letter to the Mother and She replied: "Please tell Santosh that I am here." That promise, I would say, She has kept all these 32 years that I have been here. There has not been a day when I could say: "I am not comfortable for my external life." Inner life, of course, is very different which She has been working on.

We were in the Ashram for about ten years before coming to Auroville. Initially Prem used to come here in the morning and return but as I was teaching in the school I could not come with him. When Prem got increasingly interested in Auroville and the Mother gave him more work here, we thought of building a house here, and ultimately we shifted in 1978.

During the ten years we spent in the Ashram I used to go to the Mother very often; for birthdays and for escorting people. At that time there was a system; one could take up to ten to fifteen visitors, record their names and details, and go to the Mother. It was always a very gratifying experience.

We were told in the Ashram that people don't go out for family functions and things like that. So, when there was a function in the family we told our folks: "No we can't come because here it is not done." And they said, "Okay, you ask the Mother; if She allows you, come; if She doesn't allow, don't." So we asked Her. She called us and put a lot of questions: Where are you going? For how many days are you going? When are you going to come back? Where would you live? And then She said: "Okay, you can go but come back soon." But She kept on intently looking at us right up to the door and it looked as if Her looks were binding us to come back—not that we had decided to stay back but something could have happened. This is one of my very strong experiences. It helped us to be steadier in this way of life.

There is one more incident which I cannot forget. I was still very apprehensive because, I was used to a very different type of life—like all when living outside. "Can I live this life or not?" Prem wrote for me that Toshi was very apprehensive whether she would be able to live this life materially, and the Mother

replied: "Tell her that I am here". And She has really kept that promise with me.

Then the recent tragedy, which all my Aurovilian friends know, that I went through; wherfrom that Strength came, I don't know; I know it is the Mother's Force. It is inexplicable how I went through, with what strength—the perception of the tragedy; facing it, facing my relatives in Delhi, and the more difficult time afterwards.

I am all alone but the Mother is really with me; and She is helping me. And people are helping because they are the instruments of the Mother. So these two, three things are my very strong experiences. But there are enough things coming to my mind to write a small book on my experiences with the Mother.

“I Told You I Will Do the Work”

Kailas

When I was living in America, whenever I asked the Mother if I could come to the Ashram, Her answer was: “Not yet.” One day, I just asked: “Mother, what’s the duration of this ‘not yet?’” And She wrote to me: “Those who have lived in America and are accustomed to American comforts would find life in the Ashram very dry, hard and difficult. So, I am not calling you.”

One day, I saw in an advertisement in a newspaper that a cargo ship was due to leave for India in a month and seats were available. I couldn’t immediately buy the tickets because I had to write and ask the Mother. They agreed to keep the vacancy open for me till the departure date. I explained this and wrote to the Mother: “Can I come? If Your answer is yes, You need not write to me; if it is still no, then You can send me a telegram.” Usually She received my letters within a week. As I didn’t receive any answer I just booked my seat and sailed off. I didn’t know that the letter had got delayed. And when the letter came to Her hands, She is reported to have laughingly said: “Oh, she has left! she didn’t wait for my answer!” I arrived on 14th August. On 15th She couldn’t see me; 16th also, as it was the day reserved for those leaving, and on 17th morning She saw me. I asked: “Mother, You did not want me to come?” She said: “No, No, you are very welcome, very welcome. But there is a work waiting for you in America.”

I was accommodated in the Nursing Home. Everybody told me that I was given the charge of the Nursing Home—Dr. Sanyal’s Nursing Home—in place of Janina who was a nurse. I could not believe it; because I was not a trained nurse. People told me: “Sometimes, the Mother gives the work one does not

like in order to break the resistance." But I could not believe this was true in my case. However one does not generally question the Mother's decision. So, I kept quiet and decided to wait for the Divine's will to decide for me. And inwardly I surrendered to the Mother.

I was informed that a patient would arrive and I had to keep the room ready. It was a patient who was living in Golconde and suffering from dysentery but she did not feel the need to go to the Nursing Home. So, she did not come. And my first test was passed. The second time I was asked to prepare the room, I was going to Bombay to release my luggage from the Customs. So, the patient could not come. The third time it was for Bula-da, who was to be operated for hernia. Dr. Sanyal did the operation at his clinic and kept him there. So, he did not come. The fourth time I was asked to prepare the room for Satprem who was to be operated for appendicitis. He preferred to be treated at home. So, he too did not come. The fifth time I was asked to prepare a room for a patient, I thought I should write to the Mother all that had happened: "In my understanding, I believe that it cannot be the Divine's intention to make me a nurse. I have no training, no inclination, and may be this is the way the Divine has answered. However, I take you to be the Divine Mother, so please correct my understanding if I am wrong." And She replied: "You were placed in the Nursing Home because there was no other decent place to keep you. Nobody has ever intended you to be a nurse. And if this mistake has happened, I assure you it will never happen again."

And then Navajata asked, "Mother, can she work for the Auroville Project?" It was '64, the idea of Auroville was just brewing—it had not really started as a project. And the Mother said, "Yes, it would be very good; she writes very well. Only if she is willing." Navajata asked me and I wrote to the Mother: "I will be relieved if it is Your will." She called me and said: "Yes, we are starting an international project of a township and we would like you to work on this project." And I asked: "Mother, can we do it through Unesco because the Unesco is an educational, cultural and scientific organization and they can be of help." She said: "Yes, that would be good but we don't want any interference."

Then in '66 I asked the Mother: "Can the Society be affiliated with Unesco?"

"Can the Society be affiliated?" She put the question back to me.

"Yes, as a 'Non Governmental Organization,'" I said.

"You try," She replied.

Navajataji was going to Delhi. So, I asked him to approach the Indian National Commission for Unesco for it. They told him that usually religious organizations are not taken as affiliated members. He returned and said: "This is not possible."

"No, it is possible;" I said, "we are not a religious organization."

He asked: "Can you convince them?"

"Sri Aurobindo has already done it," I asserted.

When I told this to the Mother, She said: "You go to Delhi and do it."

I went to Delhi and met President Prem Kirpal of the National Commission. He said: "Okay, you prepare a paper, stating the difference between religion and spirituality and show how your organization differs." I did that and showed to the Mother. The Mother approved and I sent it and we got affiliated to Unesco in 'C' category — which is just the 'exchange of information between the organizations and Unesco.' We had to inform about the Unesco's projects to our Organisation and our activities to them. This helped us to announce the project on an international basis. Not only that, we got the first resolution passed by Unesco in 1966 commending it to all for participation in its realisation.

Now, we wanted the participation of all the countries in the foundation ceremony of Auroville. At that time, Gilbert was there and he said: "Well, we can send Kailas to Delhi; she can meet the embassies and get their participation; they can send a youth with a bowl of earth from their country to pour in the foundation of Auroville." At that time I was not willing to go out of Pondicherry. Actually when I came, I came to do the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. I didn't know that I would be involved in such work where I had to go out. So I was not very willing and I had to write to the Mother: "Mother I can do the work from here; whatever you want me to do. Do I have to go out?" The Mother did not reply. I began to churn within. When the Mother

doesn't answer a letter I used to think that I might have done something wrong; or the Mother doesn't approve. And I was wondering what I should do.

When I went to the Ashram Book Store, I saw a card printed with the Mother's message saying (now I can't remember the exact words but it was something like this): "You must know how to be alone with the Divine in the midst of all circumstances. You must know how to be a friend of the eternal in the midst of all occupations." So I asked: "Mother, You didn't reply to me. But is this your answer?" And She wrote: "Kailas, with all my love and blessings." And then I went to Delhi and went to a few major embassies of all the continents. Some embassies including America and the Soviet Union sent their youth for the foundation ceremony with the soil of their country.

Before the ceremony, in '68—because I had worked with the United Nations and I had seen the Charter, I thought there should be a Charter for an international township also—I asked: "Mother, would you not write a Charter for Auroville?" She said: "Yes, Yes." And She wrote the Charter. Then a resolution had to be passed by the Unesco: that they accept Auroville's program as in line with their program and were confident that Auroville will fulfil their aims too. Again I had to go to Delhi to see Mr. Salah-El-Tewfik, the Unesco's Representative in India; I had written a resolution for the General Conference emphasising the principles of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy on Human Unity and inviting all members to participate in the project. When I went to Delhi, the Unesco Representative modified that with some additional text but he kept what I had written.

I had earlier shown the Mother the resolution I had made and She had said it was alright and could be sent. And when I had brought this resolution corrected by the Unesco Representative, the Mother said, "It's all hot air," and added, "but it's okay, if they wanted it, let it be like that."

The Unesco General Conference meets every two years and passes resolutions. Of course I didn't go to do any work there in Paris; Navajataji used to go and follow it up. But in 1970, Roger and Prem Malik wanted me to go. I said, "But I have no feeling for going." They said: "You are very comfortable here and so don't want to go. Why don't you ask the Mother?" I

wrote a letter to the Mother: "Mother, they are asking me to go to Paris before Sa..... retires from Unesco in 1970 but my mind is blank. I don't know what I am supposed to do. However, if it is your will that I should go, I will go." She said, "Yes, go and do the necessary. This will be a new opening for you."

Before leaving I said, "Mother I would like to see You." She called me. When She saw me, She said, "You don't like this *Blank Mind*? People take years to arrive at it. It's very good." (*Blank Mind: Integrally Pure Thought*; the Mother first named the flower *Blank Mind*!)

I said: "Mother, I don't know what I am supposed to do!"

"But it is very good (the *Blank Mind*). If your mind is silent I can do better work through you." She pulled out a blessing packet for me; it had the photo of Sri Aurobindo. She said: "It is Sri Aurobindo who will work through you."

The brother of Svetlana was in Paris. He was working for television in Paris. He came to see me and said: "Would you like us to have an interview with the Deputy Director General of Unesco, whom you know?"

I asked if it was possible and he replied: "Yes, we can do that." Now this was not at all in my mind but the Mother organised everything! A meeting was arranged at a place and a pot-luck luncheon was served. The Deputy Secretary General answered many questions. He said that Auroville was an important project, which could achieve peace and unity in a way that none of the organizations had succeeded in achieving. He assured that freedom would be given to every individual and it won't be a coercive society. The whole interview with twelve questions was later translated from French to English and published in 'Mother India' magazine.

All this had not come out to the public view. I brought it to the Mother. She said: "See, I told you I will do the work." I said, "Yes Mother, You did it." And that was the only work I did in Paris.

Then I asked: "Mother, I would like to work on two projects of Auroville." She asked, "What?" I said: "Cultural Pavilions and Auroville University." "Very good," She said. "But Mother, I would like Your help in this," I added. She gave me the guidelines on which I should proceed, but said: "You have read

the books of Sri Aurobindo, you know them very well. You can take the guidance from Him. I am not necessary." I used to send my compilations from Sri Aurobindo's writings but whenever I asked, "Mother, can I not use something from your writings?" She said, "No, Sri Aurobindo is enough for Unesco; I am not needed." She would always put Herself behind.

One thing I would like to share with you, which is very personal, as it may show the Mother's way of working. I used to do things for Her: make cards for Her and write my prayers on it. Once I said: "Mother, be Kali with me but mould me in your image of me." Mother gave me Her blessings. Once I wrote on the card I had printed with the flower of *Victory* in front and *Friendship with the Divine* on the back. Inside I had pasted the Mother's photo called 'Realisation'. Underneath I quoted the lines from Sri Aurobindo's book 'The Mother': "When she is allowed to intervene in her strength, then in one moment are broken like things without consistence the obstacles that immobilise or the enemies that assail the seeker." She returned the card to me, writing: "Kailas, my love, my force and my blessings are with you."

United Nations had proposed project of a world University for Human Unity. They had asked Unesco to execute it. Unesco had sent us a circular with a questionnaire and asked us to make a project report. Though I was put in charge of relations with Unesco, all the Unesco material would come to Navajata. Whenever he had time, he would see it and then it would come to me. And this had a deadline. They had discussed in their committee what to give as a project report. But Prem Malik told me that they had no clue as to what to report as a project. Navajata came to me as the deadline was approaching within two weeks. And I told Navajataji: "Bhaiji, now there is very little time and I don't know what I can do." He said: "Don't worry, we have asked questions to the Mother and She has okayed them; so you can build a report on that."

Now once before, when the Film Division people had come to get a film made on the Ashram, they had approached Norman Dowsett. He asked me if I would do it. I said I would ask the Mother first. And the Mother had said: "Yes, she can do it provided she does not ask help from anybody." Now this was

not in my mind at that time when Navajataji asked me to make a report. And I prepared a sort of paper. I don't even remember what was given in it. When I sent it to the Mother, She was so angry that She threw the paper. "Who has asked her to write this?" When I heard that I was shattered to pieces. The anger just penetrated me; I couldn't eat or sleep for two days. I regretted. I prayed at the Samadhi for help" You wouldn't believe, Sri Aurobindo just came to me. My hands just touched the book and it opened at the page needed. The vision was given to me and I prepared the report, taking excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's books: The Life Divine, Synthesis of Yoga, On Education and The Mother's writings. It was a compilation from Their writing, giving the *raison d'être* of Auroville, the international efforts to achieve unity which failed and the reason of their failure, the obstacles in fulfilling the ideals and the third part, giving the principles of education and what Auroville University for Human Unity can do, with the project of cultural Pavilions in Auroville and the aim of Auroville being the realisation of Human Unity how the whole township could be conceived as University, where the lessons are not only taught but lived in practice. I wrote the gist of it and prepared the project report. I sent it all with Poornaprema, Mother's grand daughter, who was taking my letters to the Mother. And I said: "Mother won't have time to read the whole thing but you can give the gist." And that was at 3 o' clock when She saw Nolini-da, Amrita and Navajata. She told them to wait outside and Poornaprema read the gist. Then She said: "You read me the whole paper." She spent more than an hour reading line by line. Poornaprema said, "At the end, She remained silent, and She said, 'tres tres bien' and wrote, 'Kailas, this can be sent, blessings.'" I was relieved. This is one experience I had of the Mother's anger. She destroyed my entire mental ego so that I could be open to Sri Aurobindo's Force.

I have many more things to tell but I think this is enough.

*Beauty and happiness are her native right,
And endless Bliss is her eternal home.*

10

“Victory to the Mother” A Remembrance from Childhood

Vinay

I was studying in the Ashram School and was in the boys' Group 'A4'—the year was probably 1962. Usually in the evenings the Mother came to the school playground after playing at the tennis court.

She would first go to the Interview Room and later take the salute of the students. We used to line up on Her way to the room and say to Her: "Bon Soir Douce Mère! Victoire à la Douce Mère!" [Good afternoon Sweet Mother! Victory to the Sweet Mother!]

She always patted the cheek of every child before entering the room.

And how shall the end be vain when God is guide?

It Rained

Shraddhavan

I came here in 1970.

It may be interesting for you to know what the system of admission into Auroville was at that time. There was an application form to be filled in and on that one's photograph was affixed and the form had to be given to a member of Auroville Administrative Committee (Comité Administrative d'Auroville)—which at that time consisted of Monsieur André (the Mother's son), Roger and Navajata.

I had come to Auroville through somebody and that person took me to Roger. I had filled in the form and from the form Roger saw that I had some experience working with children and immediately got quite enthusiastic and said: "Oh, Mother is encouraging us, She is pressing us to start a school in Auroville and you can do that!" So, because he was keen that I should join in that work, just after a day or two, he took me to the Mother—at the time allotted to him with the Mother. She used to start early in the morning; I think even as early as six o' clock in the morning. She started seeing Her regular people who had some special work for Her. So Roger's time was, I think, about 9 o' clock and I was asked to meet him on the stairs to Mother's room. As I waited for him there, he went into the Mother's room,—and there were many people waiting; the stairs were packed with people—and he must have spoken to Her, because I was called in. It was the 19th of November 1970 and was a rainy day and I think the electricity must have been off.

In my mind, when I think of that first meeting with the Mother, it's as if it was happening under water. There was a kind of greenish light—and I didn't see any details of the room—I saw

Her only, sitting in a chair, in a bluish green dress. I had some flowers which I had been given to present to Her. I looked into Her eyes and She looked into mine and after some time She gave me a beautiful creamy rose; and then I knew it was time to go. I knew that I had to try and open myself as much as possible but I can't say that at that moment I had felt anything earth-shattering. But I had completely forgotten about Roger, about Auroville, all that—I went down the stairs and Roger had to come running after me to say, "Yes, Mother says it's alright, you can go and work in the school." That way everything was taken away without me feeling that anything extraordinary had happened. So, that was the beginning of my life in Auroville. It was in June 1972 that She gave me my name, "Shraddhavan".

The last time I saw Her physically was at the August darshan of 1973; that must be a very memorable occasion for many people. I remember, I had been told that it never rained on the darshan days. Three of the darshan days fall in times of the year when rains can be expected; but people had told me: "No, Mother has it under control; it never rains at that time." On the darshan days there would be a meditation in the morning; one could visit Sri Aurobindo's room and then in the evening, at sunset, about five or five-thirty, Mother used to come to the balcony, the balcony above Sri Aurobindo's room overlooking the Dispensary street and the people used to gather there; She would stand and look down on everybody. So on that occasion, 15th August 1973, as She was standing there, the rain came down. I remember that one sadhak, Anil Mukherji, was standing next to me. Afterwards he said, "Every drop is grace." I don't know. But, maybe also, the elements were weeping because it was the last time.

*O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power,
The revealing voice of my immortal Word;...*

Kali, the Destroyer of Obstacles

Roger Toll

It's wonderful to be here after a long time.

I came to Pondicherry from London at the very start of 1972. I had wanted to come immediately after I discovered Sri Aurobindo and the Mother a few months earlier, but the Bangladesh war intervened. Having used the months of waiting to read much of the works of Sri Aurobindo, I arrived at the Ashram and very soon met Navajata. I don't know what he saw, but he mentioned me to the Mother and She asked me to come to see Her. I went to Her a few days later, which was perhaps the 17th of February. It was a totally unexpected grace to see Her; I knew that She was seeing very few people at that time. I went to see Her again on the 20th of February, which was my birthday. And again I saw Her on the 21st at the Darshan at the Ashram. These four days were a revelation and deepened my connection immeasurably.

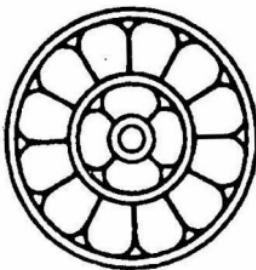
I began to work with Navajata on relation first with the United States and then on relation between Auroville and the outside. The story that I want to tell you is very personal but for those who have not known the Mother, I think it shows the extraordinary grace that She could bestow on all of us, in a very tangible form. I was living in the Ashram and at a certain point, perhaps it was in March, I wrote to Her—I cannot recall the subject exactly but it had to do with my *sadhana*. She asked me to come to see Her. So I went on my own, and not through Navajata or Shyamsundar or any of the other secretaries people went through. I waited upstairs on Her terrace and went in when I was called.

In my previous visits to Mother, it was very similar to Shraddhavan's wonderful description: nothing existed in the room but the Mother and She was enormous. You would walk in with

flowers, you would place your head on Her lap, look into Her eyes, She would touch your hand, give one a flower and off you go. This time it was very different. As She was looking at me, perhaps She saw an obstruction in my inner being and decided to do some 'spiritual surgery'.

Holding both of my hands between Her two hands, I suddenly felt an enormous pressure,—certainly too great to originate from a very frail, small, ninety-three years old person. It was very, very powerful. And Her face went from that smile—as all those who have seen the Mother will remember, it went from ear to ear, vast—and took on the ferocious face of Kali by an imperative determination. Her right eye seemed very distant, perhaps in other worlds, but Her left eye appeared to begin to spin around as though it were a drill, and She bored down into my deepest heart right down to the level of my chest. She hit a deep, tenacious layer of what felt like hard rubber. She pushed against it and it barely budged. It actually hurt physically. She pulled back out, and smiled broadly from ear to ear while patting my hands. Then again, She dove back in,—with Her eye spinning,—entering through my eyes, with Her consciousness. She hit the same obstruction. Again She came back up, reassuring me in the same way, then dove back in a third time with an ever greater intensity. This time the obstruction ripped open. Her consciousness went right into my heart centre and opened it. It was an incredibly powerful experience. When She came back out, She said, "Et Voila, mon petit," and She patted my hands and gave me a big smile along with a *transformation flower*.

It was an extremely intense experience. That is the kind of work that She could do and it was a great grace. It was the turning point of my life and it is what, I believe, truly made me what I now am. I thank Her forever with a heart absolutely full of gratitude. I left her room with a mixture of thankfulness and post-surgical pain, but soon I felt only an intense, constant connection with Her presence that lasted for ten days.



My children,

We are united towards the same goal and for the same accomplishment — for a work unique and new, that the divine Grace has given us to accomplish. I hope that more and more you will understand the exceptional importance of this work and that you will sense in yourselves the sublime joy that the accomplishment will give you.

The divine force is with you — feel its presence more and more and be very careful never to betray it.

Feel, wish, act, that you may be new beings for the realization of a new world and for this my blessings shall be always with you.

THE MOTHER

“Her Organisational Power Was Tremendous”

Kamla and Krishna Tewari

Krishna Tewari: I am going to talk about the year before I actually met the Mother – because that year was one of the most momentous years in my life and in the history of this great country called Bharat—India; I refer to the year 1971—the year in preparation of Sri Aurobindo’s centenary year 1972. I was in the Army posted in Calcutta and we were confronted suddenly with a very grave situation, when in East Pakistan which is presently Bangladesh, a big problem arose, as a result of which millions of refugees started coming into Indian part of Bengal and other states—Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya. (Indian part of the partitioned Bengal is called West Bengal—the other part was the East Pakistan.) It became quite apparent that this influx cannot be stopped unless some drastic measures are taken and in a country like ours, drastic measures mean military action. I was directly involved in the headquarters of the Eastern Army at that time as one of the heads of the arms and services and it became quite apparent that we might have to go to war with Pakistan to stop the influx. Because in East Pakistan the suppression was so terrible—we saw the refugees, miserable men, women and children (ultimately in millions)—had come into India and perhaps some of you know that the Bengal part of India is fairly congested in population as it is. And to feed those millions of people was a colossal problem for India. Not only feeding them but looking after them—because soon after the clamp-down in East Pakistan took place in March 1971, the influx into India had started. In June-July all these people had

come in and the monsoon had also started. In Bengal most of the countryside gets flooded during monsoon except for roads and high grounds—which were all filled up with refugees. If military action had to be taken, it would mean bulldozing the people off the roads for the military to act. It was a nightmare of a situation and the military dictatorship of Pakistan at that time was quite unrelenting.

But during those grim times, a divine instrument—one of my own officers—came and said to me, “Sir, why are you so pensive these days?” In a typical military language I turned around to him and said, “Chum, if you had a clue of some of the problems that I am facing these days—I can’t share them with you as it is all top-secret—you would be more pensive.” I had been warned at that time that we might have to go to war. But he had come prepared,—he said: “I shouldn’t be advising you Sir, as you are my old instructor; I have a humble suggestion: ‘Whatever your problems, write to the Mother for Her blessings.’” I had no idea of the Ashram or the Mother and hence I asked him, “Whose Mother?” He said: “The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram.” I had heard of Sri Aurobindo, but not of the Mother. I pondered over the situation; if I should write to a French lady, being a military man with all the problems involved on security considerations and so on. But after two or three days I wrote to Her and said, “Dear Mother, I can’t tell you what the problems are but I have been advised that I could seek your blessings on the problems that I am facing—I will be grateful for your blessings.” My letter came back to me signed across: *“Blessings, Mirra.”* I call this a miracle. In the book I have authored I talk about the divine intervention in the war. Our problems started getting resolved slowly and slowly. All of us in the Eastern Army, from the top Commanding-in-Chief to all of us (heads of different Arms and Services), had received Her blessings through the same instrument who happened to be one of my own officers. We didn’t know that all of us had separately asked and received the blessings. One day I was travelling with my Commander-in-Chief. (We used to take off from our HQ in Fort William in Calcutta in a helicopter and go to Dum-Dum airport, get into an aircraft and fly down to places we had to visit.) We were to go to Tripura and we had to go right round East Pakistan. What

would take 55 minutes direct flight took us five hours then. We were travelling in the VIP aircraft, the boss was lying down and we two others were sitting—I had the blessing packet of the Mother in my pocket. I used the same words to the Chief, “Sir, you are very pensive this morning.” He sat up and said, “Krishan, you haven’t done your homework this morning.” I was taken aback because till then I had never been caught without doing my homework in all my 29 years of service and I said so. He opened one of his pockets and took out a message in which our Russian friends had told us that the Chinese were moving towards India’s borders and Assam. I had been a POW in China and I am allergic to the Chinese. I reacted to the boss saying, “Oh, no sir, we can’t cope with two fronts now—East Pakistan and China”; to this reply he said, “Krishan, never mind” and he opened his other pocket and took out a blessing packet of the Mother to show me. My immediate silent reaction was, “Et tu Brutus!—you’ve also received the blessings?” That’s how I discovered that the others had also received the Mother’s blessings. It was amazing—this Divine intervention!

In about August-September after Sri Aurobindo’s birthday, we received a little booklet titled ‘Sri Aurobindo and Bangladesh’. Bangladesh did not exist at that time and this name existed only in a resolution of Mujiboor Rehman’s party—Awami League who had wanted a Bangladesh—Sonar Bangla; the booklet written by Satprem, Mother’s confidant, talked about Sri Aurobindo and Bangladesh. We read it and we were astounded. We read for the first time Sri Aurobindo’s message of August 15, 1947 wherein he talked about the partitioning of India; so it got us thinking. We were working almost 20 hours a day and those were momentous days we were living through. We would have gone to war in October 1967. Indira Gandhi who was our Prime Minister at that time was also in contact with the Mother, (it was the biggest Grace at that time). She decided in late 1971, to go around the world capitals to explain India’s stand. So the operations were delayed. There was a divine plan behind that too—because we didn’t have to start the war—Pakistan preempted us. They attacked first on 3 December 1971 and although we were all ready, we didn’t have to start the war. And in two weeks time we won the war—93,000 regular Pakistani

soldiers surrendered to the Indian Army. Never before had it happened in the history of the Indian Army! How did this happen? On 16 December 1971 the surrender was signed. The next day, we met the Commander-in-Chief of East Pakistan, General Niazi, and one of us asked him, “What happened to you?; you had all these fully equipped soldiers—How have you surrendered?” He replied, “I don’t know—it was hopeless. I knew I will be wasting the lives uselessly and I surrendered.” How did this come about without the orders of his supreme commander? And I say that the Mother was acting directly. We started our connection with the Mother from that time. And that’s why I say that without having met Her physically, without even knowing that She was there, I met and got to know Her. I often think of those momentous days. Soon after the war I came here and I met Her physically for the first time in February 1972. That was also another momentous event—I was the first military man to meet Her after the formation of Bangladesh. I came with my doctor wife who was then a Major in the Army and along with our three children. We only got three days leave to come here— what momentous three days they were! We were there for the foundation ceremony of Matrimandir and we had a meeting with the Mother. When we went up to meet the Mother, I think it was Roger who met us outside Her room and Madhav Pandit had taken us in. One of them had told me, “Think of all the things you need when you go before the Mother and they will be granted without your asking.” When I came out of the room, I looked at this person and suddenly felt very self conscious. I realised that I had gone completely blank when I was in front of the Mother – not a single thought. In fact, I thought She must have seen me as an idiot of an Army officer, as I had gone completely blank—no thought at all. Kamla will describe the first meeting. The second time, later in 1972, I met Her alone. I was not allowed to sit in Her presence but passed in front of Her.

I remember meeting an admiral of the US Navy whom I met here, soon after I came to Pondicherry—Admiral Rutledge—he accosted me one day and said, “Hey general, how did you guys do it? In two weeks time you guys overran that whole country; where did you get the arms and equipment from?” I said, “We

had a big bridge connected to the Mother and that's how everything was done." I am sharing this with you because it's so important for us to know how direct the Divine intervention was. When I went back to Calcutta after the visit to the Ashram, I immediately asked for premature retirement, as I had decided that I would like to be here. And I let the Ashram know this decision of mine through Madhav Pandit who was the Secretary to the Mother at that time. I was rung up 3 days later and was told that the Mother had forbidden me to leave the Army. She had said it four times, I was told, "He is not to leave the Army. He must not leave the Army. He must continue in service. We shall decide when he is to leave the Army." I promptly withdrew my resignation.

The Mother's intervention on that historic occasion, and the vision of Sri Aurobindo that partition must go had set us thinking. Bangladesh had become a friend of India. The other part West Pakistan still remains to become so. We are not good instruments in solving our own problem and we create more complications, but perhaps it will take longer. So I thought I would share these thoughts, because they live with me very very vividly even now. It is wonderful to share these momentous moments.

Kamla Tewari: It's not easy to recount what exactly had happened. As he has described, there was a very strong and special atmosphere in Calcutta; all the top-brass had received these blessing packets from the Mother. Of course the Indian Army fought very well and we were also very busy—I was working in the Command Hospital, Calcutta and we were flooded with the war wounded. The first thing was that the leave given to us for 3 days was very reluctantly given—to visit the Ashram of which we had absolutely no idea, our knowledge was zero. When we came as a family, two adults and three children, the youngest being six, and the very next day at 4.30 in the morning we were told of Matrimandir inauguration in Auroville. So we came along to Matrimandir—that was my first experience of this completely barren land full of red dust. We walked from Aspiration side to Matrimandir and were covered in red dust from head to toe; and all we saw next to the banyan

tree was a deep crater, and early morning Sunil's 1972 music was played. It was wonderful, I thought that I had never heard such beautiful music before; it was like out of this world and I felt at that time within me a voice arising that said, *this is your place*; and how and when I would come I didn't know, but that was the voice saying, *this is your place*. After the end of the music we were all given a pebble and asked to put it into the east pillar foundation which I think is Mahalakshmi. (*Named after an aspect of the Divine Mother*.) That whole day was very intense—this was 21st February, Mother's birthday. At 10 am we had a meditation in the Ashram, sitting around the Samadhi. I thought: I could never meditate for half an hour and here I was in deep meditation when the first gong went and woke up only after the second gong—I wondered what had happened to me! How could I manage to meditate for so long! And then we had the darshan of the Mother from the balcony and even the children remember that. The Mother standing on the balcony and we were so far below, but we felt influenced by Her. There was a very strong atmosphere, which one would always remember. On 22nd morning, we met the Mother as a family; five of us, being the first military family to come here. We were given an audience with Her—She was sitting in a chair and we were standing in a row, and he (Krishan) went first and sat at Her feet. We had all taken flowers (for the Mother) and were instructed to keep looking into Her eyes till She gave us a flower: I saw Krishan's face, and it went completely blank; after that he was given his flower—a red rose. And then when he came away, I kneeled next to Her—I don't remember Her face at all, only two deep blue eyes and I think everything else went blank; it was so powerful. When we were coming back in the evening to Chennai station, I was weeping all the way, one daughter was jumping around, she had high fever right through the train journey, the other two can describe for themselves. This was something that affected all of us—it was a very powerful meeting. But I would like to put across that as an Army family coming from an Army discipline what struck us was the quiet discipline in the Ashram; anywhere you stood, you stood in line, in silence. There was a very strong discipline, which appealed to me at least. You went to the dining room—and as

a doctor I wanted to look around—and saw all those large pressure cookers; food being cooked for so many people. I was told that it was all done by the Mother. It was something tremendous—Her organisational power was tremendous.

“She Was with Us; We Felt the Heaven Was with Us”

Deepshika Reddy

I saw the Mother for the first time when I was 13 years old, in 1959. I came from the Delhi branch of the Ashram. The day was the 1st of December, and the Mother was distributing Prosperity to all the Ashramites in the room above the Reception hall, which is the one you see just as you enter the Ashram. When I went to her, she smiled and gave me a small soap cake as *prasad*. To the rest of the students she gave a delicate pink rose flower to each.

The first memory and impression that I have of the Mother is something very ethereal because she was fully clad in a spotless white sari. Light in various hues through the tinted glass panes of the upper part of the large middle door—especially violet—were reflecting on her white sari and somehow it seemed like a dream to me. It did not feel as though I really met and saw the Mother whom we had been worshipping at home for so long!

We all came out and down to the courtyard, did *pranam* to the Samadhi and started walking towards the playground. Those days our radius was between the new Delhi House, Samadhi, Playground, Dining hall, Flower Room, library and the tennis ground. We all circled within this area year after year almost. As we came out, my friends were curious to know what the Mother had given me. When I said that it was soap, first they got quite upset as they all got a rose each. As one can expect, kids did not have much value for the rose initially. After a while one of them said, “You know the Mother is God, is it not? She knows very well that you do not bathe properly daily. So she gave you a piece of soap. We do not need it.”

We were in the Ashram for a month. That time in the Delhi

school, Dr. Chamanlal Gupta was our teacher, philosopher and guide. He brought us all by the train to Pondicherry. We used to live in the Delhi House, which is now turned into a beautiful guesthouse, as you all know. It was quite close by, and from the next day onwards we were coming for the balcony darshan in the morning by 6 a.m. That is how it started. In a way I was especially lucky as my birthday is on Christmas I could go to her on Christmas day and, as I was young then, I used to get lots of cakes. We kept coming a few-times and thus a deep bond was struck with her. I did not understand anything about the yoga or philosophy. We just loved to come to Pondicherry. After we returned, we kept contact with her through letters whenever needed. During that time, in one of her letters, she mentioned that I would become a teacher. Fortunately, I did not have to think too much about my future. I knew what I had to do and I was equipping myself towards that. To teach in the outside world for the school levels, one needs qualifications like Bachelor of Education and Master of Education, etc.

Ten years passed by, and I was completing my studies. By then I had written to her twice asking whether I could come and settle in the Ashram. Both the times she refused me. Kireet bhai told me later what she had exactly said, "The time has not yet come for her." I was the eldest at home, and in Indian houses girls in early twenties are given in marriage. One did not wait too long to get married those days. I wanted to join the Ashram, and I thought I loved her so much but she did not even reply to my letter!

Then in 1969, in summer, on 11th May, I went for her darshan and gave her a small slip, in which I wrote that she had not yet permitted me to stay there and in the meanwhile I might, miserably, get married and go away; was it not sad! The slip was a small laundry chit on which before going up to her I scribbled these thoughts. Now, when I see Ananda's (my husband's) letters, so many in number, in his measured handwriting, to the Mother as they carried so much respect and reverence to her,—I realize my shabbiness, casual attitude and carelessness. I almost pushed that slip into her delicate palm and came down.

It was, that day, the birthday of the Corner House. It was quite a celebration. In the afternoon at around 3.00 or 3.30

p.m. Nolini-da came and said, "You have become an Ashramite from today. Mother said this." I was overwhelmed and cried for a long time; O, I could not believe my ears at all! Finally, a small circle seemed complete.

Then I happily joined the Ashram and became an Ashramite in May 1969. As the Mother had mentioned in her letter earlier, I expected quite naturally to work as a teacher, that too in the Ashram school, which was my dream. But, meanwhile, I developed a bad throat. I was worried that I could not sing properly. She said that it was not the singing I should worry about but that I should not talk for one full month. I was absolutely shocked! Then I wrote to her asking whether it would be possible for anyone to stop talking for a month! Then she wrote back sternly saying that I had not to talk for one full year! She was very serious. I could not be a teacher without talking! I had to join the Corner House. I was quite disappointed. I did not know any cooking. I had to learn everything from zero. I got so disheartened that it took me two and a half months to finally decide whether to accept the long-cherished Ashramiteship at all!

At that time it was very difficult for me because I was not at all surrendered in my attitude. It appeared to me as though teaching was the respectable work and cooking had no value. As I did not even know how to peel a potato properly or mix the dough, my co-workers used to laugh at me and I used to feel hurt. But I was able to learn everything in a short time, and I enjoyed great friendship with all of them. I became one of the head cooks cooking nine times a week for 350 children or more each time. In fact, I started loving cooking and enjoyed it. Our greatest attraction was to cook on Thursdays because on that day food would be sent to the Mother. On Thursdays I always cooked non-vegetarian, either chicken or fish, also lamb at times. Someone else was cooking the vegetarian items. When the food was taken to her, she would not eat the food; she would look at it, bless it, and occasionally take a spoon of it close to her, I was told. Later the food would be returned to the Corner House for all of us to partake as *prasad* by 1.15 p.m. We used to run for it.

A year and more passed by and I felt as if I was born to be a cook only. I got so much involved in it. I realised it later that this work was the most needed for me. I was not so easy. It was

her grace that prepared me for life. After this experience of the Corner House, I became a changed person who could sweep the road, clean the gutter with a smile—no problem whatsoever. My life was made, and I truly feel so full of gratitude for that.

However, one day I wrote to her asking about my teaching work. She replied that I should go to Auroville school, which had just started. I was once again shocked because I thought all along that the Ashram school would be my teaching place. I could not believe that always such contrary things had to happen with me alone! Of course, I loved Auroville; I had come all the way from Delhi to participate in the inauguration of Auroville in 1968, February just before my M.A. final. 'The Charter of Auroville' fascinated me as something most unique on this earth. But still I was shocked. I needed to be much more humble and devoted; hence the battering perhaps continued.

I came to Auroville to see the school and have the first experience of the school; till then I had not replied to the Mother. Slowly, perhaps I was learning to become a little humble. The sharp edges were slowly getting smoothened. I went to the Last School and what did I see? Rod was sitting in the middle of seven or eight children and a dog. Two of them were playing, one was playing the flute, one was sleeping.... the dog too was sleeping. Rod himself was gazing upwards towards the sky... I fell from the treetop! Is this the classroom and Mr. Rod the teacher? Oh Maa!! I was used to formal education and whatever kind of a free-progress system I knew about contained a lot of order and classroom discipline. I was so shocked with all of those together that I approached Rod and asked him, "What are you teaching, Sir?" He replied in a blissful manner, "...experiencing joy...."

Next day I wrote to the Mother that I was ready to join the Aspiration School on the August 15, 1971. Finally, I decided to join and partake of the joy that Rod was experiencing. We were—to name a few among the first teachers selected by the Mother – Ananda, Shraddhavan, Shantiben and myself. We had a lot of 'growing' together. There was no syllabus, no proper library, classrooms were being shared and a few were also being built. We were teaching in Sanskrit School and the Last School. A crèche was started simultaneously. I was teaching history, Sanskrit and Hindi at that time. I always wanted to become a

good history teacher, as I had a very boring teacher teaching history to us. I had written to the Mother about it once and she told me that I would be a good teacher. I also taught music—Indian music. Rose, Martha and Miriam were my very good music students.

Mitch, an American, used to be a very good music teacher teaching wonderful folk songs and English songs to us. We used to sing loudly during nights. Those were the early days in Aspiration School. There were not too many communities like today. A few people stayed in the Matrimandir camp; a few at the Forecomers, Utility and Fredrick's place and here and there. Aspiration was the largest community. Not too many people. Auroville was very young. Nowadays we see visitors and people coming to stay temporarily. At that time we burned all our bridges and came here for life only to serve this beautiful ideal of living together. We used to teach what we felt was the best for that kind of a mixed group of children from France, Germany, America along with the children from Kuirapalayam. I remember that I taught from some books of the Ashram school. Ashram had always been very co-operative and generous. I used to bring packets of medicine from Nripen-da, the Ashram doctor for our Auroville children. Slowly the Health Centre came up quite efficiently. We made small groups of children on a certain capability basis and taught them the languages, mathematics, history, geography, painting, music, dancing, etc. For dancing Anuben used to come from the Ashram periodically.

I also started a cooking class with children after Pour Tous started to function and it was quite a hit. We allowed our students, at times, to choose their teachers and gave quite a lot of liberty in terms of learning. Learning and teaching was nothing but joy. What Rod said regarding “experiencing joy” was wholly true. On rainy days, we would stop our classes and go for long walks on the ravines or even to the seaside. We had very flexible timetable and the groups were named, and I still have a big timetable written in detail, signed by the Mother as approved by her. All sports activities are also written in the timetable. If on certain days children wanted to play cricket for the whole morning, we allowed them, provided they made up their study at another time. Regular classes, of course, were held in general. But sports were more organized and the whole physical

education was more orderly. Ananda organized the sports on the Ashram lines. He used to take 'marching', Frederick took basketball, etc. We had a lovely time. Sometimes on Sunday mornings, Ashram groups used to come and we used to have competitive games with them. For studies, we had no tension. There was no homework system at that time.

In the beginning, there was no kitchen in Aspiration; I mean a proper big one. Food used to come to us by bullock-cart; also vegetables and fruits. There was also a van. Sometimes the van would arrive late. Students would feel very hungry after their games in the evening. It is to meet the need of these children that I bought a heater to boil some 'chana' (chic peas) or some vegetables to give them. Slowly, the main kitchen (near the tamarind grove) was started. We used to go to the mango grove and play or even take classes with small groups of children. Sometimes in those beginning days, there often used to be no water in Aspiration. Then I used to take the children to the single tap available near the kitchen, give everyone a bath, wash clothes and return by walking back to Aspiration. We used to carry our buckets, mugs, etc., for the bath.

Then it was informed to the Mother that some parents wanted to keep their children in a hostel in Aspiration school. I was the first guardian with four students for me to look after in a three-room capsule in Aspiration. Mother told me to teach and live in Aspiration but remain an Ashramite.

Those were the days when the Matrimandir was being built. We would go early mornings and evenings for working on the four pillars. Buses used to come from Ashram also. We did not involve the small children in this work. We elders used to go early in the morning after taking black tea—around 4.30 or 5.00 a.m.—mostly do digging, etc., and return by 7.00 a.m to go to school, full of red dust. We had no servants or laundry. We had to wash all our clothes ourselves that turned red. We had such wonderful time those days—the sunrises and sunsets, so many different kinds of birds chirping at specific hours of the day, long walks on moonlit night to Utility, bonfire at the daybreak—we never wanted to go back to Pondicherry at all. During the harvesting season, we would take our kids to the Green Belt, where Joss was, and engage them in practical work while the lesson was in progress. They learnt about pollination

and so many other things there. Many of the trees you see on that road were planted by our children then.

I was not only a guardian and teacher, I used to eat with the kids, play, teach them history through dramatics, music through chanting, cooking jam with the mangoes plucked from the trees by the children themselves. It was a living together that taught us many more things beyond just the lessons. Sometimes we used to call Richard, the renowned botany teacher of the Ashram school, and he would walk endlessly with the kids, picking up twigs, flowers, seeds, leaves, etc., teaching us their significance, importance, usage, etc.

Those days, I used to write letters to the Mother whenever I had any difficulty or a problem. I was not like Shantiben and Ananda who had regular correspondence with her. We came to know so many things through their letters. Whenever we wanted to take the children for a picnic outside or stay out for a night or two, we always wrote to her and only with her permission we could go. Without her approval and blessings we never ventured anywhere. Once, I remember she refused our proposal for a night out somewhere nearby. Very often she used to send some reply or messages that used to be put up on the notice board in the Aspiration kitchen, meant for all people in general. We used to very enthusiastically go to read those in the mornings.

She was with us; we felt the heaven was with us. We used to think that one would not be able to breathe outside Auroville, perhaps—so deeply were we identified with Auroville then! .

Through the dramas of the ancient Babylonian or Egyptian culture that I used to get enacted by the kids in my history class, I think we used to feel that Auroville ever existed on this earth from ancient times and we were experiencing the joy of that honey in this life.

*Music brought down celestial yearnings, song
Held the merged heart absorbed in rapturous depths,
Linking the human with the cosmic cry;...*

Flowers for States of Consciousness: The Central Flower for the Matrimandir Gardens

Richard

I would like to draw from what Aster said in the very beginning regarding the collective movement. We are all here today to remember the Mother—a remembrance of the past perhaps but also it is in the present and will be carried far into the future. I would like to also remind you of a word from General Tewari or Kamla, one of whom said: “I was an absolute zero—I was blank, with nothing in my head.” I point this out simply because we are all here today sharing the presence of flowers—mighty, subtle, delicate and transforming flowers. It is impossible to describe a flower; it is possible to enter into the presence of a flower by becoming a zero, being blank!

Here are the flowers of the twelve gardens of the Matrimandir. But first let me tell you how I first came upon these twelve names given for the gardens. We were working all day for many days, doing kolams (traditional South Indian designs) for the inaugural ceremony of Auroville in 1968. We came in the morning, worked through the day and went back in the evening for physical education ‘group’ for there were children with me from the school, where I was teaching; but this too was part of my school work.

All this was for the day of inauguration the 28th February, 1968; there was a beautiful exhibition, I remember the balloon flying high. But what struck me most however was a small placard, on which was written, in French ‘Matrimandir—love’; then there was a list of 12 gardens which now we will take up,

and at the bottom, 'Banyan—unity'. I don't remember much about anything else but this struck a very deep chord in me and this was the first time that I saw these names—perhaps I had not even heard about the 12 gardens of Matrimandir.

Somehow the Mother wanted to choose the flower for the twelve gardens from the wide range of Hibiscus to which she had already given the largest number of names for one single genus. Basically they represented forms of power, beauty and consciousness in often different subtle variations, according to colour, size as well as single and double forms. Even some time earlier the first one that the Mother liked she named *Divinité—Godhead*—and she would say, "I am giving you godhead." This was the first Auroville Flower, I believe. Later on, for the Auroville flower that all of you know, the orange hibiscus, she said: "This is also for Auroville; it has the colour of the soil of Auroville. They are both flowers of Auroville." She had already named it *The beauty of supramental love*.

Later the Mother called to bring all the Hibiscus flowers that I could get and said: "I want to know the meanings of these flowers so that I can name a flower for each garden of the Matrimandir." I told her: "You know the names, they are your names." In her beautiful divine modesty, she said: "I need you to remind me!" So, I met her every month on a Tuesday and I believe Narad very excitedly would gather all the Hibiscus flowers that he could get and I collected others from Ashram gardens.

That was a magical moment; in the Ashram and in Auroville, hibiscus were growing that were new to everybody. They were—Hawaiian hibiscus. It was the golden period of the Mother's dream being brought down,—what she called the 'Spirit of Auroville'. It was as though a descent took place.

When I took these flowers to her, she wanted to start in order and the first garden is *Existence*. She picked up one single pink Hibiscus flower and admired it and asked, smilingly: "What is this called?" I told her—"This is the power in the psychic"—so, she said, "But we have to put the word existence in here, how will we do that?" And she named it finally, after some minor changes: *the psychic power in existence*. Then after that came *consciousness*—there was a yellow double golden hibiscus

already called: *Supramental Consciousness*—she said this was luminous, like that consciousness. She chose it for the garden of *consciousness*. The third was easy: *bliss* (*Félicité* in French)—ananda; it is also a hibiscus already named. It is a single small medium sized dainty flower.

The next day, after the first three gardens *existence*, *consciousness* and *bliss* or *satchitananda* the descending triangle in Sri Aurobindo's symbol came—then *life*, *light* and *power*, the ascending triangle of the symbol. For *life* she chose, a happy and vibrant soothing double, red medium sized flower called *power of the consciousness*, as all double red hibiscus are. For *light* we had *purified power*, and Mother changed the message or meaning to *light of the purified power*. The one she named had long petals—it lasted two or three days and exceptionally, it was fragrant. The next was *POWER*—Mother chose a very special flower—*aesthetic power*. There are two or three forms—but usually it's a very old fashioned large flower with long broad petals and white spots behind each petal. Incidentally her comment for this flower is: “Beauty is a great power.”

In the third set we have *youth*. A very old flower *Supramental beauty* which we do not see that often was renamed *Beauty of supramental youth* for that garden. It is a single medium to large coloured. And along with that we have another old fashioned hibiscus: *Supramental beauty in the physical*. After *youth* comes *usefulness*. The Mother had named a flower for Auroville *Usefulness of Auroville*. This was changed to *Usefulness of the New Creation* since Mother felt that the word Auroville would not be as universal. Indeed there are about fifteen other Hibiscus named for Auroville, like *Success of Auroville*, which later changed to *Power of success*. And this is followed by *progress*; it's a small single flower with orange stigmas; it is the *power to progress* and we also have the single flower white with pink veins and orange stigmas, *power of progress*, but Mother only chose the first small one.

After that the last triad is formed of *wealth*, *harmony*, *perfection*. Towards the end the Mother did not choose all hibiscus, except for *harmony* which have several varieties. It is a medium to large single flower, coloured soft ochre yellow with a pink, orange or light red centre. It is the *power of harmony*.

For *wealth* she chose water lilies and cactus, *wealth and riches* respectively. For *perfection* she said, "Today we don't need a hibiscus, since we have this—the *psychological perfection*." It is a flower named by her in the very early days probably before 1929. In short this is what I wanted to share with all of you. Now I would be happy if each one of you takes a flower as a friend or mentor: the blessings of the Mother.

I would like to draw your attention at this moment to something that I read only recently. Somebody said to the Mother, "I was arranging this vase and I said to the flower: 'Oh, you are going to the Mother,'" and the flower smiled. When the Mother heard this she asked, "Was it a rose or a hibiscus?" The disciple said that it was a hibiscus. Mother commented: "This is a very conscious flower; I have seen this often."

To conclude, there are two things that Mother always said about the flowers: firstly, that she could transmit more force to people through flowers than through any amount of talking; secondly, she said, "Some people always bring me fresh flowers, while others bring withered flowers—they are never able to bring me fresh ones." In the first case the aspiration is ardent living and strong.

Let us keep our flame burning in the heart to offer her fresh flowers and thus be ready to receive her blessings through our contacts with flowers!

*Answering with the flower's answer to the sun
They gave themselves to her and asked no more.*

Moments to Cherish

Varadharajan

When Dr. Beena suggested to me that we should have a programme "Remembering the Mother" wherein those who had personal darshan of the Mother could share their remembrance, I was reminded of an incident with the Aspiration group that was meeting the Mother.

First, four to five people were meeting the Mother. When more wanted to go, She said: "I am going to ask you an indiscreet question: how many are sincere?" Well, if sincerity was the test for going to the Mother, I did not know how many of us would pass. But Her love and compassion was so great, She allowed us to go to Her. To speak of the Mother with the right attitude and correctly, is as difficult as being sincere. I invoke Her presence, Her grace to present everything in the right way and also in the right spirit.

I was given the work of dealing with the local people. I had asked what should be our attitude in dealing with the villagers. She had replied that the villagers have so long been treated as inferiors that they do not trust us and that if the Divine were to take the attitude of superiority, then the whole of mankind would be crushed in one moment.

I felt that She gave Her force to all equally, including animals and plants. Once She said that She had been told that in Aspiration there was a big number of cats and dogs. "You know, I have nothing against cats and dogs. I have kept some also at one time. I have been obliged to ask not to keep dogs. There are some diseases, rather serious and dogs and cats carry them. It is always impossible to avoid rabies and then it becomes dangerous and you will have to kill them which is not a pleasant

business." She added, "All I am asking you to do is not to allow the number to increase in any case. One day you will come to me all in tears saying life has become impossible." All of us laughed. She was compassion incarnate.

At one time, two villagers had given through me one or two rupees each as offering to the Mother. The Mother asked me "Do they know of my existence?" I was very much moved—the Supreme Divine asking that question. I said, "Yes, Mother." She took out two blessing packets and said in Her liquid voice: "You will give them that (meaning the blessing packets). You tell them: 'The Mother is sending them for you. Keep that upon you, it will help you.'"

While in Aspiration I felt that the Mother is the Supreme Divine and there was a kind of reverential distance between Her and me. As time passed by, I began to feel that She is not only the Divine Mother but also the human Mother. The nearness grew, with the result that I felt that I could ask Her anything. Once I felt that I would do something which would make the Mother and me happy. This prayer of the Mother on 31.3.1917 came to me. "Thou hast heaped Thy favours upon me, Thou hast unveiled to me many secrets. Thou hast made me taste many unexpected and un hoped for joys, but no grace of Thine can be equal to this Thou grantest to me when a heart leaps at the touch of Thy Divine Breath." I wrote something on a piece of paper and gave it to Champaklalji. He read it and took the Mother's hand. The hand moved and with a single finger touched my heart. I concentrated with as much love and affection to give my whole heart to Her and my heart leaped to Her. And She responded beautifully. It physically confirmed to me what I had read.

In the Aspiration group, Bhagawandas used to put his head on the Mother's lap. Though I had long been wanting to do likewise, my being in the Aspiration group gave me the necessary push to place my head on Her lap, which is always in my memory.

Sometime during the early years, there was a lot of misunderstanding, parochialism and all such things between the local people and Auroville. There was a sort of crisis. Nobody could give a satisfactory solution. I felt that the Mother alone could give it, as it was a policy decision regarding their status

in the context of Auroville. Also we had to tell those people what Auroville stands for. And I was really sorry that all this was happening in spite of the Mother pouring Her love in abundant measure. It was around September, 1970 and the Mother was not seeing anybody. Yet She had to be approached as the crisis had come near to physical violence. André-da, the Mother's son was one of those few persons who were meeting Her. I wrote a note about the situation and he agreed to take it to the Mother. I thought the Mother may give a blessing packet. Once my note reached the Mother it was alright for me.

André-da told me that the Mother had asked him to read the note. And in that note, among other things, I had written: "We see in society today that the rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer." I had added, "Auroville wants to show a new way of life." Keeping the first sentence intact, She added to it, "It is against this calamity that Auroville wants to fight." Even at that age and amidst her multifarious activities, She went through the entire note giving meticulous attention to the details.

As the last sentence in the note, I had written, identifying myself as a representative of the Tamil population, (as my work was connected with the Tamil people), "It is certain that the Tamil people will do all they can to realise human unity." I felt certain, because the Tamil spiritual culture is such a rich one. On that paper, the Mother wrote a big "Blessings". It was so BIG that it was a special one.

There was a time when Tamilnadu was not very receptive, but today there is a great opening in Tamilnadu towards the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Nowadays one has to wait for a long time as thousands of devotees from all over Tamilnadu come for darshan.

Thank you all.

*A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.*

“Your Wings Are Growing”

A Remembrance from Childhood

Ange

Well, I don't have much to say, because I was pretty young when I met the Mother and I was a very difficult child in the Ashram school. I had a lot of trouble because I had too much energy and somehow I kept running out of the classrooms. In those days, parents who had joined the Ashram had surrendered their children to the Mother and got very busy with their own sadhana—so I was sort of surrendered into this system of education. I also happened to be one of the children that was allowed to see her every Sunday—that was when I was around six years old... Mother passed away when I was eleven. I used to see her every Sunday—and there were only three of us who had that privilege. At that time I didn't see it as a privilege, because it meant I had to get up early but I received a bag of sweets at the end of the meeting and that was a good motivation...

I can tell you about changing my name to Ange. I was called Sabine before and children in my class used to make fun of my name—*sabine-kabine*. Kabine was a word for toilet I think; I used to get fed up, and I wrote to the Mother and said I didn't want to be called *sabine-kabine* any more. She wrote down four names—Ange, Angelique, Angel and Angeline; all had something to do with 'Ange'. Anyway she asked me to pick and I picked Ange and then I said, "Mother, nobody is going to listen to me when I tell them." So, she wrote down and said: "From today onwards Sabine has to be called Ange." My mom had sewn me a little white dress, which had those little shoulder

strips that were tied together like a ribbon and I used to wear that dress when I went to see her and she would start playing with those things saying: "Those are your wings, you are called Ange." And Ange is Angel in French. She used to say: "Your wings are growing." I would immediately argue saying those were not my real wings and I wanted real wings. She said, "Your invisible wings are there; I can see them grow. Every time you come they've grown a little bit."

Around that time there was a movie shown in the Ashram playground called 'Born Free.' It was about lions in Africa and I fell in love with the idea of having a lion and so,—of course the person to ask for a lion was the Mother—I started asking the Mother. "I really want a small lion." This 'lion thing' went on for quite a long time—she would send me pictures of lions and various sculptures of lions. The messenger was Suresh Bhai, but I was never happy and I pestered her every time: "I want a real lion to hold and grab." And I would day dream for days on end about my lion—and on what I would do with him—and he would eat all those bad kids that always gave me a hard time. Anyway, one day she told me about an invisible lion that I had always with me—protecting me and always going where I was going. But I was of course very pragmatic and said: "No invisible lions for me, I want the real thing; not a toy, not an invisible one." So to keep me quiet she said, OK, Ange you're going to have the first lion in Auroville—now I wonder when that first lion is going to come and what I'm going to do with it when it comes. That was the lion story.

It was a thing for me to see Mother's feet—she always wore socks under her dress. Every time I went, I would anticipate that if I raised her dress—and if she did not have the socks on—I would get to see her feet. This was one thing that I always did: I would bow down and then pick up her dress a little bit and look for the feet—and there were always socks.

Another thing I came to know later when I was nineteen and in my French class with Tanmayada who was also very close to the Mother and used to go to her for school problems. He one day told a story about me of which I was not aware till that time. Because I was very difficult and unmanageable and so on he had gone to the Mother to ask her what to do about me. It

seems Mother said, "Ange is far too intelligent for the school and if the classes were more interesting, then she wouldn't run away from the classes!" I only came to know about it when I was 19 and by then I had had quite an inferiority complex—so this helped a little bit.

I was eleven when Mother passed away, and I remember that I didn't believe it and I stood in line to go and see her body. And I went into the line three times and every time I approached I was sure She would open her eyes and look at me, because She couldn't be possibly leaving me or us.

It's kind of hard for me to talk about these things; they are really far,—it seems lost in the past—and I have later on established a wholly different connection with her. She is a part of my life and whatever I do, she is there. When I go to sleep I offer her the day that has gone and when I wake up I offer her the day that is to come.

Now I remember her telling me something when I was particularly bad one day. The lady who stood right behind her said: "Mother, say something, because some complaints came." She said: "Sois sage et raisonnable [be good and reasonable]." Till today, I try to be 'Sage et raisonnable.'

There is another thing connected to my sister I will tell you about since she herself is not there to tell about it. It was difficult for my parents to raise me and my sister was another difficult one—and she had come from Germany when she was twelve. She had a hard time adapting to the Ashram lifestyle,—to the strict rules—and also she would do things like climbing over the door in the night and hanging out with her Tamil friends. My dad wrote to the Mother and asked her what he was supposed to do and if he should lock her up or take up strict measures. And I have this in writing: the Mother said, "When a child is 14 years old, she or he is old enough to make own decisions and [should] be given complete freedom and the parents should just be there for advice and support when the child turns towards them." So when I was fourteen, my parents called me and said, "Now you are fourteen and we have to do the sadhana with you";—because for them, it's a much bigger effort than for me—"lets try this: you do whatever you want from now on and you can come to us when you have questions

to ask." My parents and I had to really work very hard on that one and I had to keep reminding them of what they had told me when I was fourteen, especially my mom. And having a responsibility given to me like that, I was much more conscious of what I was doing. I knew that my father wouldn't go to bed, till I had gone to bed and so I would make sure that I would be in by 9 or 9.30. It changes the whole attitude. I felt I was responsible for myself and I had to look after myself and I think it was really good.

I am at the end of what I had to say, so thank you very much for listening.

*King-children nurtured in that spacious air
Like lions gambolling in sky and sun
Received half-consciously their godlike stamp:...*

“One Look Was Enough to Put You into an Absolutely Different Dimension”

Shirley Lyons

I am like a butterfly that flies into Auroville for three or four months and then leaves. I have been doing this since 1972. When I read about this program I came here because I have had an intense meeting with the Mother. I don't know if you are exhausted or want to hear another story.

Seventy-two years ago, I was born into a Dutch Christian Reform family. From the age of eight through eleven, my brother and I would spend every weekend at the home of my very religious grandparents.

Each Sunday we began our weekly routine by driving to a large red brick church at nine o'clock in the morning. We entered and filed down the aisle to the third row from the front. We spent two hours sitting on a hard church pew, chewing two peppermints, and listening to a very zealous preacher deliver a hell and damnation sermon. At eleven o'clock, my brother and I raced each other down the steps to the basement for another hour of Sunday School.

Later, at home, when the noon meal was finished and we were still seated at the table, my grandfather would continue our relentless religious training. He read a chapter from the Bible. Before we were excused, we had to answer questions about what he had read. If we (including my grandmother) responded inaccurately, he would reread the chapter and re-ask the questions. Needless to say, we three became very good listeners.

The next regular Sunday events were to dry the dishes for

my grandmother and get ready to walk or ride the ten long city blocks back to church for an hour of Christian Endeavour (a children's program). At seven-thirty in the evening, we were very happy to go to bed early rather than attend the church service again.

During those formative years, I would frequently complain to my mother about how long and boring the preacher's sermons were. Her response was always the same: "You are very lucky! When I was a child, that two hours was in Dutch."

This religion continually reminded me that I, a mere child, was a sinner. That statement perplexed and angered me. I kept asking myself, "What sin did I commit?" Could it be the cookies that I would sometimes sneak from cookie jar? Was it that each time I had to walk to Christian Endeavour, I would stop at the gas station and spend half of my collection money on a candy bar? None of it made much sense to me, so I wasn't a strong believer in a God who didn't like me.

Suddenly, one Sunday morning, from out of nowhere, religion became extremely exciting. I was seated between my grandparents and the preacher was full-fledged into his usual sermon, when I heard a very clear, precise voice coming from just above the right side of my head. The voice said, "Everyone is going to become a Jesus."

I shuddered with inner shock and alerted fear. Had my grandmother, whose ear was inches from mine, heard what I had just heard? If so, I was in trouble. How dare I believe that we are good enough to become as great a being as Jesus! I glanced at my grandfather. His eyes were not staring back—I was safe. I could keep my secret.

In 1967, at dawn on the seventh day of the seventh month, when I had just turned thirty-seven years old, a voice came to me again. My husband was on a business trip. I was in an apartment in Barcelona, Spain, with our two young children. My bedroom opened into the living room. I could not see into that room while I was in bed, but I could look outside through the double glass doors opening from the living room into the terrace.

I was awakened by what sounded like the flapping of wings in the living room. As I listened intently, I thought that something was flying around and around near the ceiling. At first I thought

I had forgotten to shut the terrace doors and a bird had flown in. To my utter dismay, I saw that those doors were closed.

Still in bed, I raised my head on my hand, tipping my right ear upward to listen more closely. The flapping sounds became more and more rapid. Soon there was a whirlwind of energy. I thought a hurricane was coming, but when I looked out on the terrace, not one leaf was moving.

Suddenly, I called out, "It's a flying saucer!" I could feel the force of a whizzing disk lowering itself to the up-tipped right side of my face. I grabbed my ear and it burned with a tremendous heat. As this was occurring, a clear voice said, "Don't be afraid, the agony of your life is over. Nothing is going to happen to these children." (Our first child had died in her sleep.)

I looked up and there in the corner of the room, just like on a large black and white T.V. screen, blinking off and on for sometime, was a portrait of a man. He had very intense, dark eyes, long dark hair, and a wiry white beard that was strange on one who seemed so young.

I sat up in bed, slightly slapped my face to see if I was wide awake, and asked myself, "Who is this man?" I answered, "I don't know who he is, but I think he is a philosopher who lived in the eighteen hundreds. He looks Italian."

I sat in wonderment. I had just experienced three normal sensations: I had felt intense heat, heard a voice, and seen a face. I knew I wasn't crazy, just dumbfounded. I had seen an apparition. Who would believe me and what did it mean, if anything? I had the thought, "Why didn't Jesus come to me?" Because Christianity was the only religion I knew, I decided the encounter had not been a religious one. Since I was living in Spain, I wondered if some Spanish ghost was flying around in the neighborhood. My biggest unanswered question was: "Why me?"

Four years later I wandered into an ashram bookstore in Pondicherry, India. There, side-by-side on the wall, were two gigantic portraits of the Gurus of the ashram. One was this mysterious man. His name was Sri Aurobindo. It was the same photo of the intense eyes, dark hair and the wire-like, white beard. The other photo was of The Mother, a woman I was soon to meet.

Visiting an ashram was a new experience for me. When we

arrived in Pondicherry, I just followed my friend from place to place. He registered me into the guesthouse, and then we went to the dining room for a silent evening meal. Later, while he went to find his daughter, I walked along the sea back to my room. I was sitting in the lobby, talking to some ashramites, when Sudarshan rushed in. He was so exited. He kept repeating, "Shirley, we have an appointment with The Mother."

I must have disappointed my friend greatly with my lack of enthusiasm for his good news. I wasn't interested in meeting this lady; I just wanted to see the school. Looking back, it was my lucky day, but I was too arrogant to realize it. An appointment with The Mother was very special because she was now too old to carry on with all she had done at one time. Even the school children were no longer able to visit her on their birthdays. The only reason we had the good fortune of meeting with The Mother was because of Maggie, the woman acting as a big sister to Sudarshan's daughter. Maggie was secretary to The Mother, who honoured her request. I was given very specific instructions: sit near the top of the stairs outside The Mother's room at eleven in the morning, with a flower in your hand.

Sudarshan walked me over to the flower shop which was across the courtyard from the stairs to The Mother's room. He told me, "If you don't know which flower to give to her, the flower shop will automatically pick the right one." The Mother had renamed all the flowers. Rather than speak to her, you handed her a flower that expressed your message to her, and her answer would be in the name of the flower she gave to you.

Upon my return to the lobby of the guesthouse, a man greeted me saying, "I heard you are going to see The Mother. Let me show you our garden of her flowers." He proceeded to name many of the different flowers, using words like Devotion, Aspiration, Beauty and Truth. He informed me he would cut any flower I desired in the morning. I thanked him for his assistance and told him I was going to let the flower shop choose the right one for me.

At ten o' clock the next morning, I went to the flower shop and explained my need for a flower. With surprise the attendant exclaimed, "The flowers do not come in until twelve o' clock.

No one sees The Mother at this time. This must be special." He looked around and said, "I have one flower left over from yesterday. It must be what you are looking for; it means Intimate Relationship."

I just looked at him, thanked him, bit my nails, and with a delicate flower in hand, jumped on my ashram bike. I peddled as fast as I could back to the guesthouse garden. Luckily, the gentleman from the night before was tending the flowers and anticipated my need. He reiterated, "The garden is yours." I marched over, pointed to some flowers thinking I had remembered their names, and asked him to cut some buds that were just opening. He cut the flowers and said, "You know what you chose, don't you?" I confidently replied, "Yes, Psychological Perfection." Inside my head, I thought: "That will put a good distance between me and Intimate Relationship." He laughed and said, "Oh no. You picked Surrender." He lovingly arranged some small roses around the Intimate Relationship flowers, and sent me on my way.

By eleven o' clock I was sweaty, shaking, and seated near the open door of this famous lady, The Mother. I had recently been told that Indira Gandhi frequently came to The Mother for advice. I was duly impressed.

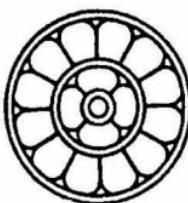
The silence of the day was abruptly shaken when Sudarshan came reeling out of the door, weeping. He threw himself down on the top stair. I said to myself: "I guess I'm next." Cautiously, I entered the open door. The room was very bright because of the big windows. Seated on my left was the bent figure of an old woman. To her left was a great pot of mixed flowers. The only way to look into her eyes was to place oneself on bended knees in front of her.

With a reverent bow I offered her my flowers. She looked into my eyes and suddenly her eyes became huge. She just stared inside of me. From lower than the pit of my stomach, a sickening coil began to unwind itself. Then she softened her gaze, smiled a loving smile, and reached for a flower. As she handed me the peach rose (Peace), an electric shock vibrated up and down my arm. I smiled reverently, bowed again, and left the room. I slowly descended the stairs and seated myself in meditation.

A previous speaker referred to the balcony darshan. I will never forget that day. It was crowded, people stood in rows packed together like sardines. I was standing in front of The Mother. I watched while she slowly directed her gaze to the far right of the crowd. She had time to concentrate on every head that was beneath her. Her gaze came to me, my cells turned into rippling pudding. Suddenly, I realized why multitudes followed Jesus. One look was enough to put you into an absolutely different dimension.

I have experienced moments with both Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Although I have never lived here I have come in and out of Auroville and that's my story.

*And nothing happens in the cosmic play
But at its time and in its foreseen place.*



We do not fight against any creed, any religion. We do not fight against any form of government. We do not fight against any caste, any social class. We do not fight against any nation or civilization.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, truth; and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

16.2.1965

THE MOTHER

How the Mother Selected the Bharat Nivas Design

Alain Grandcolas

I would like to recollect for you my visit to the Mother's Room for the selection of the architectural model of Bharat Nivas. [Bharat Nivas is the name of the Pavilion of India in the International Zone of Auroville.] It may be interesting to know how was selected the wooden model which became a little bit controversial considering that after 30 years there are several buildings but not much life. On the wooden model, which is exhibited in Bharat Nivas, we can see a big auditorium (which is existing and used), a rather huge restaurant (which is existing but not used), and twenty identical pavilions in a mushroom form which are meant to house the various states of India. In each pavilion, the living space is within the top of the mushroom—may be twelve meters higher than the ground—and the access is through a staircase inside or lift. This is the final product which has not yet been constructed. How such a model was selected?

When it was decided to start 'Bharat Nivas', we thought that since it was the Pavilion of India, we would have a competition among Indian architects. I was asked to take care of the competition. We sent some four hundred invitations to the most known Indian architects inviting them to compete. I do not remember how many architects have expressed interest but finally we received in Pondicherry more than twenty models of size at least one and a half by one and a half meter. A jury was constituted, with Roger Anger, Ramanathan, Anjani Dayanand (Chief Secretary, Government of Pondicherry), the Governor of Pondicherry, Piero, with the mandate to select three amongst the twenty models. And amongst the three selected by this jury, the Mother would select one. No names were there on the models, so that the jury

would not be influenced by the Architect's name and I remember that one of the models which almost got number three was by a team of Ashram students. We took the three models to the Mother's room. It was quite difficult because the models were big and the staircase was quite small but they entered the room.

Roger's selection was the model with mushroom-like pavilions and all other members of the jury didn't like this model and had other selections. Roger was supposed to present all these three models to the Mother, describe their advantages, drawbacks, the specific features etc. So, I very strongly told Roger before entering the Mother's room, "You know Roger, if by chance you show your preference while describing the three models to the Mother everyone will know about it!" And Roger presented the three models one by one, in an absolutely beautiful manner, and even myself who knew what his selection was, could not tell which one could be his favourite choice. Then Mother looked successively at each model with intensity. On each of them She asked some questions and always Roger answered in a very impersonal way. After looking at them two times, She stopped in front of the Chakrapani's model—the mushroom type model which was Roger's selection. Then She said: "This one. It is more supple."

She said it was more supple. Some people have understood lately that She was giving permission to change the design, which, according to me, is a wrong understanding. In all the other models, each state pavilion had its own architecture. For example, Tamil Nadu state pavilion had Tamil Nadu's architecture and Kerala state pavilion had Kerala's architecture. But in Chakrapani's model, all the pavilions have the same architecture, and none of this architecture was reminiscent of any Indian architecture. So I understood when She said it was more supple, it meant that if some new states merged with India then it would be easy to accommodate the new states.

This is how the present architectural design of Bharat Nivas was really selected by the Mother among the other models.

“What Do You Know about His Destiny?”

S. Mahalingam

When one speaks of the contacts with Avatars like the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, people would naturally expect to hear wonderful, miraculous happenings. But in my life, nothing extraordinary has happened. Of course things have happened in my life which for me are important, precious and I cherish them and I am grateful for the grace that made those things possible, but for others it may not be so. Firstly I am just going to say how I came to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

When I was twenty-one I read the complete works of Swami Vivekananda and all that was available of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. Then I read Swami Rama Thirtha's 'In The Woods of God Realisation.' Though I knew enough mentally to practice yoga, I wanted to do it under a Guru and wrote to Sri Ramakrishna Math in Madras asking permission to join the Math. They asked me whether I was a graduate. I, with the arrogance of youth, thought, "Oh, if this was the condition to join Sri Ramakrishna Math, then Sri Ramakrishna himself won't be admitted." I didn't reply and that was the end of it. Still I continued searching for a Guru. I was also reading Swami Shivananda of Rishikesh and wrote to him saying that I wanted to become his disciple. He accepted me as a disciple and after sometime, in 1944, I went to Rishikesh. The natural sceneries, the high Himalayas and the crystal clear waters of the Ganga etc. were fantastic. Though it had an effect, something in me was telling me: "Go away from here. Go away from here." The Swamiji was all kindness to me and everything was alright but

something in me was not satisfied. "Go away, go away"—all the time. When I had a walk in the woods, I would feel this "go away, go away." So, after remaining there two weeks, I came away. I had left the training school two or three weeks before the Government examinations, when I returned it was the last examination day. A friend of mine somehow got the Mother's 'Conversations' [published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram], translated into Tamil by Kothandaraman. Somebody had given him that book. He had no use for it but remembered that I was interested in spiritual things and he gave me that book. After that I have never met that gentleman in my life. If I had come one day later I wouldn't have got the chance to get that book. The Mother somewhere has said that when one needed to read a certain book, if one was destined to follow that line, somehow somebody would put that book in his hand; if it was necessary that he should meet a person he will meet that person. That was what happened. After reading the Mother's 'Conversations' I felt, oh, here is my way, this is my path.

Immediately I wrote to Sri Aurobindo directly. And Nolini da (the Secretary of the Ashram) replied: "Sri Aurobindo does not attend to correspondence these days; it is the Mother who replies if and when necessary." That was all. Then I read some articles about Ashram, the Mother, darshan days and all by Kothandaraman in Dinamani, a newspaper from Madras. Learning that four times in a year Sri Aurobindo and the Mother gave darshan, I applied for permission. Two or three times, I got the reply: "Not this time." Then, in October, 1945, Nolini da replied: "Are you known to anybody in the Ashram?" And I said: "No." Yet, surprisingly, I was given permission for the next darshan—in November, 1945. Of course to have the darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is a result of Grace. Then after one or two years, I wrote to the Mother saying that I wanted to join the Ashram. Again Nolini-da replied, "We do not have enough accommodation to take new entrants/inmates and it is not necessary to come to the Ashram to practice this yoga. You can practice in your own place by reading Sri Aurobindo's books." Two or three times, I got the same answer. Then I left asking for it.

I used to come and stay in the Ashram during the holidays.

In 1955, I left my headmaster's post in a high school and just came to the Ashram without any plan. Then Madhavji (a senior sadhak of the Ashram) himself asked me: Do you want to join the Ashram? It was a pleasant surprise! All these years I was asking for it but now, without my requesting Panditji was asking: "Do you want to join the Ashram?" Of course I said yes and I joined the Ashram. But that was not the end of it. After about four years I left the Ashram. Again I returned in 1960. Three times I joined and in a way I consider myself thrice blessed. And at the last time—it was reported to me by a friend—when they were discussing my letter with the Mother, someone who was there said: "This man, when he is outside wants to come here, when he is here wants to go outside." Then Mother said, "What do you know about his destiny?"

I know that my destiny is with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. When I read Vivekananda and Shivananda and all those literatures, I thought I would realize the Brahman in two or three years. The utmost limit I gave was five years. Now after turning to spiritual life more than fifty five years ago I think I am in the same place marking time. The only consolation is that my face is turned towards the Sun... the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. So I am satisfied. I am not worried how many births it will take to reach the goal. I am theirs, that's all.

In 1944 I wrote to the Ashram for a photograph of Sri Aurobindo. I never knew Sri Aurobindo would autograph the photo if one wanted. I didn't know all that. I just wanted a photograph and I got a photograph with Sri Aurobindo's autograph. That too I consider is an act of grace. I still have that photograph on my table. And then when the book 'Sri Aurobindo on Himself' and 'On the Mother' came, I bought a copy and sent it through Prithvi Singh for Mother's autograph. When the book returned with the autograph of the Mother I saw a slip in it with the words: "Mahalingam of Thirunelveli" in Prithvi Singh's [handwriting]. That meant the Mother identified like that. To be in the Mother's mind is an indescribable grace. When I left the Ashram for the second time Mother asked Amrita: "Why this fellow is always running away?" Amrita told Her that I was the only earning member of the family and was very attached to the family and so though

I would like to be in the Ashram I was leaving the Ashram. Then Mother asked him, “How much is he sending to the family?” Amrita said: “Fifty rupees a month.” Those days I was a graduate teacher and the pay for a graduate teacher was just hundred rupees a month. And Mother arranged to send sixty rupees to my family. She did it so that I could be near Her which was my sincere aspiration. In those days, I had heard people in Pondicherry say that to join the Ashram one must give lakhs of rupees. So here is a case where the Mother gave money to a person’s family to keep him with Her. So Mother somehow wanted me to be with Her. When I think of it, naturally, I am very grateful. The last time when I left the Ashram, I went to the Mother for Her blessings. Mother gave me a blessing packet and She Herself asked, “How many members are there in your family?” And then She gave each member a blessing packet. So Mother loved me and through me perhaps also my whole family.

As I said I have no extraordinary experiences, but I have seen the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, not only have seen them but heard them also, many times in my dreams. Generally I don’t remember my dreams. But I clearly remember the dreams, even the small details, when I see the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. And even after waking up I would feel as if I had met them physically and its effect would be there for days. So I believe they were not just dreams; some part of my being had really come in contact with them.

Before coming to Sri Aurobindo I was a devotee of Sri Krishna. It started when I was a student in a Christian high school; I don’t know how I got the book there—‘Gopalan Bala Leelaigal’. I am sure it was not in the library. The school authorities were not just Christians but Christian bigots and 85% of the students were Christians and there were very few Hindu students. Suppose some student came with the Viboothi (a religious mark on the forehead sported by devout Hindus), they would ask them to wipe it out. They were intolerant. There was the name Hari in a school lesson. The teacher in my class didn’t know that Hari was the name of God Vishnu of the Hindus and he read it as Harry. So it was impossible that I could get a book on Krishna from the library of that school, but from some other

source. My devotion to Krishna thus started and it was always there. People told me, "When you come to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, you must forget about all other gods and goddesses." Even though I had read Sri Aurobindo's letter to Dilip (a senior disciple of Sri Aurobindo) where he has told him: "If you reach Krishna you reach the Divine. If you can give yourself to Him, you can give yourself to me." Still I had some doubt till Sri Aurobindo came in a dream and solved that problem. In the dream, Sri Aurobindo was standing before a big mirror and He called me and pointing to the mirror said, "Look." I looked at the mirror and lo, there was Krishna. And I looked in front of the mirror and it was Sri Aurobindo. Again I looked at the mirror, and again it was Sri Krishna. So after that dream all my worry about my devotion to Krishna coming in the way of my devotion to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother vanished.

In the Ashram they used to show films, opposite to the relief map of India at the Playground. Sometimes the Mother used to watch the movies sitting in a chair near there. Once I was sitting very close to the Mother and naturally I was not looking at the picture but only watching the Mother all the time. To remember things like this is to feel a great sweetness. How far I have progressed in yoga, I don't care much about all that. Let it take ten more or hundred more lives, I don't care. If I can remember and remain faithful to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, that is enough for me. When I pray at the Samadhi I only ask them to make me capable of more and more love for them. That's all, the rest I leave to them and I am happy. Let them give me the realization in Their own way and at Their own time.

While doing translation work,—more than 10,000 pages of works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have been translated—I just pray to the Mother to give me the capacity to do the translation well. And sometimes I get the right word. The word I may not have used for years and years but suddenly I would get that right word. Of course translation work is my Sadhana in a way. I can't sit in meditation. For the last fifty years, I have been trying to meditate and I have left it as hopeless. Most of my translations were collected works of the Mother and I would

feel that I was listening to the Mother's voice. When I am doing the translation I feel deeply happy and satisfied.

* * *

In one dream there was quite a long queue going to Sri Aurobindo and I went and joined it. Then Nolini-da came hurrying to me and asked me to leave that queue saying that that was not my queue and himself took me upstairs and put me up in a different queue where there were very few people.

* * *

In another dream I was in Sri Aurobindo's room (not his room in the Ashram). He was writing something. I was standing behind Him and I looked over His shoulders to see what He was writing. He was writing my name in what looked like a visa paper.

* * *

When I first joined the Ashram I was sent to an Ashram garden near Ariyankuppam. I was given a house to stay. Mother even arranged to get a cook from my native village to prepare for me the kind of food I was accustomed to. Once she visited the garden. She came to my house, went to every room, especially She minutely scanned the kitchen. She asked me if I was comfortable there and everything was all right. I was very much touched. See, I was quite new to the Ashram and didn't know anything about Her ways with Her children. My idea about an Avatar at that time was that He/She would be grand, far, and not easily accessible. So....

There was a poultry farm in that garden. I was in charge of it and I took the Mother to it. There, She noticed a young cock with blood wounds. He had got them while fighting with an older one. Mother took him in Her hands and caressing him said in a soothing voice, “Poor fellow!”

* * *

Pathamadai is a small town in Tirunelveli district. There they make mats of a very fine quality. It is called 'silk-mat' and in fact it is like silk. Generally mats are used in Tamil Nadu to spread on the floor to sit or sleep. But these mats are used as bed sheets. They are made from a kind of reed that grows only on the river-bed of Thambravarni. At the time of the wedding of Queen Elizabeth—then Princess Elizabeth—a specially made 'silk-mat' from Pathamadai was sent to her as a marriage present. When I first came to the Ashram I bought one 'silk-mat' from Pathamadai and offered it to the Mother. The Mother who loved beautiful things appreciated that such a beautiful article could be made from simple reed and the mat got a place in the Mother's room for sometime.

“If the Mother Is with Me, Then I Don’t Need Anything”

Lachman Ben

Remembering the Mother? It is actually no more remembering; She is with us, being a part of us, and working through us. She has just moulded our life and we have to keep ourselves open to Her. This is what I feel.

I remember when I first heard about Auroville—I was in Bombay—immediately I had this thought: “Oh, I would like to have a plot of land and live there.” But it took its own time.

I came here on my 40th Birthday in 1969. I had placed my head on the Mother’s lap and given myself to Her. A new life started for me. Actually I was not drawn much to the Mother. Sri Aurobindo and his teachings had attracted me. But gradually the Mother came into my life. How She controlled and moulded my life to come and stay in Auroville is really a wonder.

I had been brought up in a family where the girls were not allowed to work and they couldn’t go out alone. In one of my experiences after coming and working here, I came across something which brought fear in my mind. I felt that if I had such a fear I couldn’t go anywhere. I asked to see the Mother. It was in 1973. I was told, “If you go to the Mother now, you won’t be able to go to Her on your birthday.” I said, “Doesn’t matter—to go to the Mother on one’s birthday is very special, still—I need to go to the Mother now.” Luckily it was arranged for me and I went to the Mother. Like a small child afraid of something I pressed my head in Her lap. I felt as if the Mother was asking me to look up to Her—not asking; it was just a feeling. I looked into Her eyes and She looked into my eyes, I

felt her going into me through my eyes. I was feeling drawn to Her and then She blinked Her eyes. I understood the meaning and got up. It was my last meeting with Her personally and She took away my fear. This is how I could stay and work in Auroville. Almost alone, I have been struggling to work for the development of Auroville. There have been difficult times, but I feel that She is always with me and is doing everything in my life.

I remember, once when I was alone in a field, a very tall and strong villager came with some cows. I asked him to go away. He wouldn't and replied, "You will have the *punya* (religious benefits) if the cows eat the grass." (Cows are considered sacred by the Hindus.) He tried to confront me. I invoked the Mother: "Mother, You said that woman is a Shakti. Now I am alone here. Let me have the Shakti." After praying to the Mother, I looked at the man in the eyes and he simply left quickly taking away all the cows. That was really the Mother's Force at work.

In the same way I have overcome my sense of having security with the money power. Now we are having the *new economy* but when I arrived, the situation was different and I said, "Oh, how will I work? How will I take responsibility?" I had never worked. The first thing the Mother took out from me was this difficulty. I did not have to depend on the money I earned from work for my living.

Before I joined Auroville, I had prepared myself by learning to make some small clay toys and chose that as my work. As some devotees were sending to the Mother whatever they prepared for the Mother on their birthday, I decided to send the toys to the Mother. I made a toy of an elephant offering a lotus to the Mother and when it went to the Mother, She remarked, "O, Très bien." I asked, "What is Très bien?" I was told: "Very good." I felt that She had received my message. So Mother knows us; only we have to discover Her.

Similarly, I remember that, when I came in 1969, I wrote to the Mother about becoming an Aurovilian. I remember in April, 1970, I saw someone's birthday card given to her by the Mother. The Mother had written in French: "Bonne Fête. Avec ma tendresse et bénédictions."

I could not understand French, so I asked what the Mother

had written. She replied, "In English it means 'Happy birthday, with my love and blessings.'" I remembered that on my birthday card in May, 1969, the Mother had written, "Happy birthday, with my blessings" and given it to me. I thought: "The Mother knows this young girl from her childhood and loves her but I have come only last year. How will She know me and love me?"

But one month later when I opened the card I received from the Mother on my birthday, I was delighted to read, "Bonne Fête, with my love and blessings." It was a confirmation to me that the Mother knew me and loved me. It was really wonderful. I got tears in my eyes at the grace She bestowed on me.

Once, someone was helping me in construction work and I found that he always overspent and I had the problem of getting the additional money. Once, I was going to Bombay and it was before the year-end. He gave me the account with an excess expenditure of Rs 6000/-. I did not want anyone to owe money to me. 'To me': it was not me but a Unit (a commercial firm I was managing). I did have some personal money but that was for my own safety and I wondered what to do. I just went to the Mother's photo and asked Her whether to pay or keep it pending. I heard these words as if coming from Her: "But I am with you." I was so surprised. If the Mother is with me then I don't need anything. And immediately I withdrew the amount from my personal funds and paid the dues before I flew to Bombay. As soon as I reached there, someone offered the exact amount of money on her own. I exclaimed, "How the Mother is arranging everything in such a way that I am neither in debt nor in credit." Like that She has helped me. And recently also, after this 'new economy', there was a little struggle: whether to save the money for the future. But then I see that She has made the circumstances in such a way that I need not worry about myself. She has given me that inner faith. When She is there then we need not worry. This is how the Mother has been present in my life.

“You Are Doing a Useful Work...”

Syamala

I think, from my childhood, both Sri Aurobindo and Mother indirectly influenced my life —without my being conscious of it at that time. Whenever my life was at some crossroads, always some force pushed me in a direction of its choosing, at times against my own will. This is how I came to Sri Aurobindo. And when I came, I didn't even know of the Mother. When I first went to Her, in 1967, I didn't know that one was expected to take flowers. An Ashramite friend said, “You have to take a flower.” I said, “My heart is the flower.” But she herself went to the Ashram garden and brought a beautiful flower—*‘Aspiration in the physical for the Divine’*. When I entered, the Mother was working at her table. I went to Her and gave the flower. I didn't look into Her eyes but the Mother looked and uttered a big ‘Oh!’ with a recognizing look and a beautiful smile. I felt recognition and a deep peace because I used to think that ‘Mother’ meant some ‘Mother Superior’ as in Christian convents. After coming out, as some of my Ashramite sisters advised, I tried to concentrate and receive inwardly what the Mother gave. And the Lord's words to Arjuna in the ‘Gita’ came to my mind: “Between us, so many lives have passed. I know all that, but you don't know.” On my birthdays,—as I was told repeatedly by people, “Don't touch the Mother,”—I never used to touch Her when I gave the flower. I think She appreciated my thought and used to give me a very gentle smile as if acknowledging my conscious effort not to touch Her.

Later I wrote about the Mother in a Telugu magazine and when I received some money for that, I gave it to the Mother. Then I thought of writing something about Auroville. And I

wrote a letter to the Mother saying I wanted to proceed with Auroville. I didn't know that She would in fact drag me into Auroville. So much She worked in me that I came to Auroville in '69, to the area presently called Douceur. At that time I was only twenty-four and this was a barren land, but we had the great grace of referring to Her everything regarding our life and work. Of course, at times it was difficult to decide whether to write to Her, as some people used to say, "You must fully utilize the physical presence of the Mother, you should not mind asking Her" yet others said, "you have to feel Her within and act."

I mostly used to work with Varadharajan and most of the remembrances with regard to our working with the Mother are already published. But I would like to share here some things She gave in my work.

My place of work was in the middle of a burial ground near the village and tamarind tree and there was only a keet-roof and bamboo shed or room without toilet. I stayed there remembering the presence of the Mother. But I was wondering whether my work was useful to the Mother — "Why should I stay here leaving a job if my work was not useful?" So when somebody told me that I had to resign my job or to go back to Madras, I wrote to the Mother. But the person who took my letter to the Mother told me, "Don't make a big letter, just write whether you should go back or not," and so I wrote only that much. But the Mother answered to the question in my mind. She replied to the effect: "You are doing a useful work at Auromodèle and it would be better for you to stay here. Blessings."

The Last school was to be opened and we had a meeting. I wrote to the Mother, that the village children need a preschool before they go to the Last School. I also wrote to Mother that my mother tongue was not Tamil but I knew Tamil enough to teach something to the children before they go to Last School. The Mother gave me Her blessings and said I should do so.

While working with Varadharajan, due to some reasons, I began to think of working independently. That was the time when Varadharajan was about to start a workers' kitchen. He wrote a letter to Mother asking Her a date to start the kitchen. And when Poornaprema took the letter, the Mother gave the

date and two blessing packets. She said, "Mother, it is for Varadharajan." Mother said, "But they are two, aren't they?" Just the previous day we had some argument and as if She knew, She gave two blessing packets and said, "They are two." That encouraged both of us to remain working together. Likewise, repeatedly She played the part of a physical Mother to me.

By Grace, a very nice thing happened during my life in Aspiration. I had the privilege to go to Mother, perhaps two or three times, with the Aspiration group. One such visit was on 7/7/70. When I went to the Mother's room, She enabled me by Her grace to see the different ways of Her working. When She is attending to somebody's health, She is concerned physically only with that at that time. And when She was receiving somebody's letter, she was reading and giving it back giving it Her full attention. A person came and was speaking about Sri Aurobindo. The Mother asked, "Did you read Sri Aurobindo?" He replied, "Yes." In my inner vision, Mother was first facing the Samadhi but when She said, "Read him again," I saw Her chair was at the other side, with the Samadhi behind Her, and that the person somehow tumbled and went to the Mother's feet. The Mother was showing that She was Sri Aurobindo's Shakti, as in my mind there was always a separation between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. That made me understand that She is His Force. And then when we had our meditation, She meditated with us in silence. Meditation in Mother's room meant something special, so we tried sincerely to be silent. Then She laughed and said, "A noisy silence. Let us try again." People used to say, "She is an elder person there; what does She know?" and all that. But I remember that when we were eight or ten people sitting in Her dimly-lit room, She leaned to the place where Varadharajan and I were seated and said, "You can do useful work in the village," with authority. Then She took up writing "To be a True Aurovilian." Then I saw at once how She was going to vast regions with Her consciousness. Her eyes were looking straight but She was going somewhere and beyond, trying to bring down and write about it. How much She worked for us!

Whenever I went to the Mother, I did not go entirely out of my own initiative but I used to think that—like in the

playground meditation, when the Supramental Consciousness descended unexpectedly — something might descend and I would miss it. It would make me regret if Varadharajan could go and be present during such an event and I missed it. Therefore, I used to go but I felt sorry if we were taking the Mother's time. But She was always smiling. She was like that to me.

People used to think, that Mother is a very elderly lady and She will forget things, and all that. Once I asked the Mother a date for starting the school kitchen. Then she wrote back a date which was a Sunday. Everybody said, "Why Mother chose Sunday! Who will be there on a Sunday?" I proceeded with the date and told everybody, "Sunday is the day the Mother has given; so all of you come." When I went for getting the vessels, the person in charge said, "We can't give you the vessels, it is for our kitchen." Then finally after arguments and counter arguments, the gentleman agreed but said, "Because you need on Sunday, I am giving you the vessels." So, when I said this to Poorna, She said, "Mother had asked—when the letter was given—'Are they ready for a kitchen?'" And she, (Poorna) had replied, "Mother, they must be ready. Otherwise why would they write the letter?" So, She was so meticulously observing and pouring Her concern.

The Mother had said that She had spoken to Sri Aurobindo in detail about organizing Kitchen, Sports and Art for Auroville. I am grateful in my heart to Her presence, which helped me to participate in all the three activities in the formative years of Auroville.

“Nothing Was Different; Everything Was Different”

Jocelyn

Maggie met us at the bottom of the green carpeted staircase in the Meditation Hall at 2.30 p.m. with an enormous smile and a small gift for me. We went upstairs. At the second landing Maggie pointed a door on the right and said in a hushed voice that inside that door was Sri Aurobindo's room. We went through an open doorway to our left, through a long room which had bookcases covered with dust sheets all along the wall and big long table in the center which might have been a library table, out onto a little porch, and then up another, narrower green carpeted staircase and through an open doorway into a large balcony.

There was another lady standing on the balcony. She was one of the most beautiful women I had ever seen. Her dark hair was in a chignon, and she had the posture and grace of a ballet dancer. Maggie introduced her as, “Poorna, Mother's granddaughter”.

Just then the door to the room across from the door to the balcony opened. A man dressed in a lungi and a white string over his shoulder, with long white hair and twinkling eyes, looked out and caught Poorna's eyes. She followed him through the door and the door closed.

Maggie looked at me, and said, “People usually kneel in front of the Mother. You go into the room and kneel in front of Her. She is very old, and cannot look up at you if you are standing in front of Her.”

I didn't believe in keeling in front of other people; may be in

front of God; but I would never meet God, and wasn't certain that I would kneel even then. Still, I did not argue with Maggie; I just didn't say anything.

Maggie had a beatific smile on her face. She stood there, silent, as though in a rapturous trance. I walked over to the edge of the balcony and looked over the rail to the quiet Ashram courtyard, and across the courtyard to other rooms and terraces. My daughter, 10 months old, was quiet as a doll, riding on my hips, smiling like a happy cherub in the gentle tropical afternoon. A sweet breeze from the sea caressed us. I opened a little package Maggie had given me, a bar of Mysore Sandalwood Soap, just what I needed! I shoved it into my cloth shoulder bag.

The door across the hall from the door to the balcony opened again and Poorna came out, looking even more beautiful, and walked down the stairs. The little man beckoned to Maggie who then beckoned to me, and we went into Mother's room.

Binah was on one arm, and I had a bedraggled bouquet of flowers in the other hand, because somebody had told me that it was a tradition to bring flowers to Mother.

The floor was thickly carpeted, and the only thing that I could see in the room was the Mother sitting in Her chair. We walked into Her room, and without thinking I sunk to my knees in front of Her. She was sitting on Her chair peering gently at us. I sat Binah down on the carpet next to Her.

Between the Mother and Binah there was a beautiful straw basket. Binah lunged for the basket. Maggie said, “Stop her; it's a basket full of eggs.”

I grabbed Binah and sat her down. Again the baby lunged for the basket, and I grabbed her and sat her down; but, Binah was clearly going to jump at the basket again. I was trying to hold on to Binah with one hand, and still had the bedraggled bouquet in the other, when the Mother looked at Binah, a powerful piercing look that made Binah sit back and sit up straight, and look back at the Mother. I did not know what passed between them, but the forceful look Mother had given Binah was so strong, I was happy that I was not the target of that penetrating gaze. Then Mother's face dissolved into the sweetest smile, and Binah was smiling at Her, and they looked

as though they shared the most marvelous joke, perfect clear wordless communication. Mother was ninety years old. Some people had told me that they thought she was a senile figurehead. Seeing Her communicating with Binah, I thought, perhaps she is senile. Mother seemed to understand Binah better than I did, so She had to have the consciousness of a baby.

Then the Mother turned to me, and said, "Parlez-vous français? [Do you speak French?]

Binah was sitting very quietly, smiling blissfully by my side, paying no attention at all to the basket of eggs. I had not expected Mother to speak to me. Everyone had told me that Mother usually did not speak to people when they went to receive Her blessing. I was so spaced out that I did not even feel able to speak English or American or anything. I just looked at the Mother.

Mother said, in perfect, unaccented English, "Do you speak French?"

I could not reply. My entire being seemed to be going through such a convulsion of bliss; but it was smooth as silk, nothing was different, everything was different, I was utterly too blessed out to reply.

Maggie replied for me, "Elle ne parle pas français, Mère." [She does not speak French, Mother.]

I couldn't speak, I couldn't move, I couldn't think, Mother looked at me and I was too happy to be laughing, but Mother seemed to be laughing at me. Because She kept asking me a string of questions in English, knowing very well that for the first time in my life, the cat had got my tongue. Maggie answered for me, things like, "Do you like Pondicherry?", "Have you visited Auroville?", "Where was Binah born?"

I felt very foolish, and Maggie very graciously answered Mother's questions for me, as though I was an idiot child.

Maggie told Mother I was going to Rameshwaram for Durga Puja.

Mother gave me a long look. She turned to the table next to Her chair and found a green fluffy flower with the most amazingly pungent and fragrant scent.

She handed me the flower and told me to give it to Panditji,

(who lived in Rameshwaram) because it was special flower that signified supramental manifestation.

I slipped the flower into my cloth shoulder bag with the bar of soap and all the junk that I always carried, and forgot it.

Maggie finally asked me if I would like to give the poor wilted bouquet I had been holding to the Mother. I handed the flowers to Mother. From the table next to Her chair, the Mother picked up a beautiful fresh bouquet of flowers and handed them to me, with a card, and a single pink rose. She gave a little stuffed lamb with a little bell on it to Binah.

Binah took the lamb from the Mother's hand, and seemed enraptured with the simple toy. She reached out and took in her other little baby hand the flower that the Mother was holding out to her, and waved her hands stuffed with the little lamb and flower at Mother, then brought them down into her lap and looked at the wonderful gifts Mother had given her. She looked up at the Mother again, holding the little treasures tightly against her body.

Mother looked at me and said, “Bring Binah to me again on her birthday.” She answered my unspoken question. We would stay in Pondicherry at least until Binah's birthday.

Then She gave us a huge smile, and I went down with my nose on the floor. Then I picked up Binah and the gifts from Mother and walked out. The white haired attendant was holding the door for me, and I started down the green staircase. I had gone only a few steps, and then I stopped. I did not want to go back down those stairs. I did not know what had happened in Mother's room but whatever it was seemed more wonderful than anything that had ever happened to me in my entire life. I had had many adventures, many inner and outer experiences, but whatever was in that room was better than champagne, better than sex, better than anything that I had experienced. It was perfect bliss to be in the Mother's room, and I did not want to go back down to the street, I wanted to go back into the Mother's room.

Maggie came down to the step behind me. She seemed to understand exactly why I had stopped there on the steps. She looked at me with a wonderful twinkle in her eye and assured me, “Don't worry, you can come back on Binah's birthday.”

By the time we got to the bottom of the green staircase I knew I had already forgotten how much more marvelous it felt to be simply near Her, and was content to think of staying in Mother's World at least until Binah's birthday in December.

My father, Bernie, had arrived in Pondicherry and he was there for Binah's birthday. Maggie was waiting for us at the gate and had a little gift for Binah. Bernie arrived a moment later.

Maggie led us upstairs to a beautiful little balcony off Sri Aurobindo's rooms, at the bottom of the staircase to the Mother's room, and asked us to wait. She told us she would call us when Mother was ready to see us, and disappeared up the stairs.

Bernie pulled out one of his huge cigars from Havana and proceeded to clip the end and light it.

I was so embarrassed. "You can't do that here."

"Why not? We're the only people here." We could see down into the Ashram courtyard at other people, but nobody was looking up toward us.

"It is forbidden to smoke in the Ashram," I said.

He took another long puff on the long brown pungent cylinder, smiled at me and said, "Relax."

I had put Binah on the mosaic marble floor with the flowers. She was sitting there in the sun surrounded with flowers, like a cherub Buddha.

Bernie took another puff on the cigar, and another great cloud of pungent smoke went into the Ashram atmosphere. I was trying to quiet my mind, and compose myself to be receptive to the Mother.

Maggie came back. "Mother is ready to see you now. She said the cigar smoke reminds Her of Sri Aurobindo."

Bernie put out his cigar. I scooped up Binah and the flowers.

Maggie said, shyly to Bernie, "People kneel in front of Mother to make it easy for Her to look at them."

Bernie replied. "I do not kneel in front of anyone."

Maggie did not say anything more and led them up the stairs and into the Mother's room.

Just as She had been when I was there in October, Mother was sitting in Her chair in the centre of the medium sized room, only the room was full of baskets of treats that Mother was

preparing for Her disciples and guests for Christmas. I ignored Bernie, went and knelt in front of Her, and sat Binah down on the carpet.

Mother said to one of Her attendants, “Please bring a chair.”

Bernie said, “I don’t need a chair,” and knelt in front of Her.

No one said anything for a long moment. Then Mother turned to me and asked, “Where are you staying?”

Again I was speechless.

Maggie answered for me, “Shelter Guesthouse.” Mother turned to Bernie and gave him a small green plastic basket full of little gifts, and then She gave me a small green plastic basket also full of gifts. She gave Binah a little handmade stuffed animal plus some sweets and flowers. She gave Bernie and me roses. She gave Binah a birthday card, and told me, “Bring Binah to me again, next year, on Her birthday.”

We all shared a moment of silence. Mother smiled at us, then Maggie led us out of the room.

I did not know why, but being in the Presence of the Mother was one truly marvelous experience. People seemed to actually change in the seconds or minutes they spent in that Presence.

When we got to the Ashram gate Bernie stuffed all the things in his basket into the corner of the seat of his rickshaw, put the little green plastic basket upside down on his head, and started skipping down the street to the beach. Bernie weighed around 300 pounds, and was wearing Bermuda shorts, high socks, nice comfortable shoes, a clean white cotton sport shirt, grey hair, receding hairline, small goatee, and was not at all the kind of person you would expect to see skipping down the street with a green plastic basket on his head in South India in the middle of the afternoon.

“Two Blue Eyes Became Blue and White Waves”

Meenakshi

Vanakkam,

We have heard many researchers, professors and scholars in this particular school of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I am just a kindergarten child and I am from the nursery of course. [Meenakshi resides in the nursery where plants for the gardens of Matrimandir are grown.]

*Antha Kangal, Antha Kangal
Ennai, Ennai Paarkum;
Ennai, Ennul Saerkkum
Antha Kangal, Antha Kangal.*

*Those eyes, those eyes.
Me they see, me alone.
Merge they, me to my inner self.
Those eyes, those eyes.*

Whenever I think of the Mother, this poem comes to me again and again: “Antha Kangal—those eyes.” Somewhere in 1969, we, a bunch of college students, boys and girls with an American scholar, came to Pondicherry. You know the psychology of young people in a new place on the loose wanting to tease everybody around and giggle all the time.

As we came from the beach side we saw many people standing in a corner of a street in perfect silence looking at a

particular point. I came to know much later that they were drawn to have the ‘Balcony Darshan.’ [Darshan: a regular event of Sri Aurobindo Ashram in those times when the Mother appeared on the balcony of the Ashram’s main building for a silent communion with the Ashramites gathered on the street below.] At that time I didn’t know what it was and why those people were standing there quietly. I was totally and thoroughly ignorant. Actually we wanted to disturb the people. “Why these people are standing so silent?” was the mental state at that moment for our group. And one could even listen to the rustle of the dresses and the breathing of the people. But slowly we also started feeling the silence. So I could silence myself along with those devotees. Slowly I became a part of one soul, one body along with the big gathering there and I was also looking up. I found a small sparrow-like being (Sparrow is called ‘chittukuruvi’ in Tamil.) moving on a balcony. And then it looked like an old person was coming, waving. Then the boom came. Two blue eyes became blue and white waves, big waves that took me, churned me and threw me completely upside down. It is very difficult to share my experience; the colour of it, the depth of it, the image, the dimension—very difficult. I try to capture in a language close to me but I am really short of words because the experience was so rich and strong. I try my best to share but still I can’t.

I don’t know what happened later—through my friends I came to know that I was taken to the Ashram hospital. There was an old doctor—later I came to know, Dr. Nripendra—who said, “I know what the problem with this girl is; put her in the Ashram hospital.” So I was taken into the Ashram hospital for three days and on the fourth day when I opened my eyes, my hair was done differently with double plaits and I was wearing a pyjama and shirt. I didn’t know how, but all got transformed—my dress, my style, everything. Then my friends told me, “Something has happened to you in this city. We were waiting three long days for you; better we rush back.” So they took me back to Madras. That happened somewhere in ’69. I came again to Auroville in 1976 on an invitation from Ruud Lohman—at a similar time such as now, dusk—asking for the location of Matrimandir Camp. That was to start the Tamil Fund for Rural

Development activities to link Auroville and the neighbouring villages.

“Where is Matrimandir?” In Kottakarai [a neighbouring village] the children gave a landmark. “There is a banyan tree; go to the banyan tree.” So, where is the banyan tree? It was getting darker and a tall gentleman came. “You are going alone!” Yes. “Better you take this torchlight with you.” “Okay, but how to return this back to you?” “Ah, it will come to me.” “What’s your name?” “John.” He guided me to Matrimandir. I somehow happened to land at the workers’ camp but Ruud Lohman was not there. But that day—I came to know later that night—the 21st February, was the Mother’s birthday. The person who received me in the camp was Toine who is my partner (in ’78, we became partners). It was his birthday too! And he organised for my stay in the camp. So all put together, now, I think how blessed I am. In the camp-room where I stayed, when I looked at the wall,—oh!—there was the blown up picture of the eyes of the Mother. And it was in Ruud Lohman’s room too. Then I got the connection. The same eyes, those which led me from Pondicherry to Madras to Madurai to Gandhigram and to so many places, various socio-political movements, underground movements, had brought me back here—to my home, Auroville.

*Antha Kangal, Antha Kangal
Ennai, Ennai Paarkum;
Ennai, Ennul Saerkum
Antha Kangal, Antha Kangal.*

*Those eyes, those eyes.
Me they see, me alone.
Merge they, me to my inner self.
Those eyes, those eyes.*

*The eyes of mortal body plunge their gaze
Into Eyes that look upon eternity.
A greater world Time’s traveller must explore.*

PART II

16.7.71

Bonne Fete

To Madan Lal

With love

appreciation of his good work
and blessings for
the realisation of his
aspirations

J. J.

Sri Madanlal Himatsingka

16.7.71

Bonne Fête

To Madanlal
 with love

appreciation of his good work
 and blessings for
 the realisation of his
 aspirations

MOTHER

* * *

Savitri Bhavan**September 2001**

We were all touched by the heart-warming words simply said by Shri Madanlalji. Extraordinary stories throwing light on the power of the Mahashakti embodied in the Mother who nevertheless was felt as the Mother by her children. We all felt that Presence, as he recounted some happenings in his personal life.

*All aims in her were lost, then found in her;
 His base was gathered to one pointing spire.*

I Remember

An Interview with Anjani Dayanand

15th August 1964 was a momentous day in my life. That was the day when I had my first Darshan of the Mother. Dayanand had been a regular visitor since 1960. He used to bring Darshan and New Year Messages through which I got my initial introduction to the Mother. The New Year Message of 1964 "Are you ready?" was the turning point in my life. It made me ponder deeply. I tried to find the answer within myself. It came strongly on 14th August 1964. That day was momentous in that Dayanand was very ill, running high temperature, in Madras. And I told him that I wanted to go to Pondicherry Ashram for the Darshan the next day. "But you can't drive the car, what shall we do?" And he said: "Don't worry, engage a driver, and I too will come." The next day, we left our son Satya with our maid, and drove down to Pondicherry reaching there just in time for the evening balcony darshan. There was a downpour. We had not brought any change of clothes and were completely drenched. I was terribly worried. Dayanand had come with a high fever. We returned immediately after the Darshan. I put him back in bed and called the doctor in the morning. The doctor saw him and asked: "What, are you joking? What has happened? He is normal." That was my first introduction to the Mother— direct. After that there was no looking back.

Before the balcony Darshan we had spent a few minutes in the Society House. Dayanand was a member of the Society. There was a big crowd in the hall. Navajata saw me and came across the hall and asked me: "Where are you coming from? What is your name?" I told him my name. "What are you doing?"

I told him my designation. He said, "I think that we are going to work together for a long time". The Auroville project had just been announced.

So, after that it was a regular contact by phone every morning—every day—to do this work or that for Auroville. No point in going into all those things. But one major thing was: he said the Mother was keen that we should acquire all the land—at least the inner circle—straightaway. I prepared a detailed note for acquisition of the required land and took it to the Chief Minister, Mr. Bhaktavatsalam, who was very understanding and approved the proposal. A Government Order was issued. The Collector of South Arcot District was directed to initiate action for land acquisition. The Collector of Cuddalore sent a letter to the Society asking for an undertaking to pay the cost of the staff to be appointed for the work of land acquisition. The total cost for one Tahsildar, one Revenue Inspector, two Karnams (village officers), and two Talayaries (helpers), worked out to Rs.68, 000/- per annum. Navajata did not accept the proposal. When I informed the Mother about Navajata's decision She was very unhappy, "Why has he taken this decision?" She asked. I told Her that Navajata felt that land acquisition through Government would take a long time; whereas direct purchase would be quicker.

In retrospect this was obviously a wrong decision. I am mentioning this because it is good to know, at least now, what the Mother's views were on the issue of land acquisition.

There were many other issues that were discussed and it would neither be possible, nor appropriate to narrate all of them at this point of time.

The other significant date in my life was 4.5.67 about which The Mother had said, "The Supramental has manifested in the administration," and when I went for *pranam*, She repeated the same to me and said to me "You will see its action by and by".

I was still working in Madras. My son Satya had come of age for admission in the school. I had sent his photo to the Mother and She had approved of his admission. I arranged with Prabhaben and Kishorilalji to take care of him and decided to go back. Before leaving I sent a letter to the Mother seeking for

Her Grace and Protection for Satya. The Mother was angry and She asked "How can she leave Satya and go. It is my responsibility to see to his education. She must take him back." After a month or so, Navajata came to Madras and brought me a special blessing packet and card from the Mother with the message from the Mother to tell me that She would be very happy if I decided to come and stay in Pondicherry. This was before 4.5.67.

And then came 4.5.67. Within few weeks the transfer order to Pondicherry came. The Chief Secretary, Government. of Tamilnadu told me: "You will be going to a job where you are not eligible for your scale of pay. You will be one down." I said that I did not mind and I would go willingly. And within a couple of months I was promoted as Chief Secretary. When I went to the Mother and told Her, She said happily: "We have done a *fait accompli*".

Work on the Auroville project had started in right earnest. Preparations were going on for the inauguration of the project on February 29, 1968.

A book '*Introduction To Auroville*' was prepared for distribution. Roger Anger took the book to the Mother for approval. The Mother said: "Show it to Anjani". They came to my office. I went through it and said that I did not feel quite happy about it and that I did not know why. Then they took it to the Mother and told Her about what I felt. She then wrote out a message: "India has become the symbol representing all the difficulties of modern humanity. India will be the land of its resurrection, the resurrection to a Higher and Truer Life." The Mother asked to show the message to me and ask me whether in the context of that message the book was alright. What more could I say, but express my gratitude to the Mother for giving me this opportunity to serve Her.

When work started in Kuilapalayam village, the people were against Auroville. They were worried that they will lose their livelihood. The Mother told me to go to them and tell them that it is in their own interest to collaborate. Auroville will bring them a lot of good. We do not want to dictate to them. Roger has shown me the plan of a model dwelling to be put up for them, which will help them to live with dignity. It was a

very good experience for me to be able to communicate with the people.

The Mother had envisaged the receipt of large funds for Auroville from international sources. I informed Her that the World Bank has the power and authority to sanction a grant up to rupees five crores for an innovative experimental project and whether I could prepare a project report for Auromodel, which was to be like a transit accommodation before joining the mainstream Auroville. After I prepared the report, She studied it in great detail and was very happy. She even went to the extent of telling me to get it printed and informed me that the cover should be orange with black lettering. We submitted the project to the World Bank through the Government of India. It did not come through then due to lack of adequate support from International Bodies. I feel it is still a valid document which can help to fulfil the Mother's vision.

The Mother told me another important thing relating to the accounting for the funds received from various sources. She wanted all Eurovilians to be treated at par, and funds coming from all countries should be put in a common account, in the general account of Auroville. In spite of Her clear instruction the management started a German account to begin with, followed by a French account, American account etc. When the Mother was informed about this, She was very unhappy.

In conclusion I would like to mention an experience I had on the eve of the inauguration of Auroville.

Sleep was eluding me because of all kinds of apprehensions. I sat up around past midnight and opened the book 'Savitri'. The following lines stood out, and after reading them I found my peace, and I went back to sleep peacefully:

The silent Soul of all the world was there:

A Being lived, a Presence and a Power,

A single Person who was himself and all

And cherished Nature's sweet and dangerous throbs

Transfigured into beats divine and pure.

One who could love without return for love,

Meeting and turning to the best the worst,

*It healed the bitter cruelties of earth,
 Transforming all experience to delight;
 Intervening in the sorrowful paths of birth
 It rocked the cradle of the cosmic Child
 And stilled all weeping with its hand of joy;
 It led things evil towards their secret good,
 It turned racked falsehood into happy truth;
 Its power was to reveal divinity.*

*Infinite, coeval with the mind of God,
 It bore within itself a seed, a flame,
 A seed from which the Eternal is new-born,
 A flame that cancels death in mortal things.*

*All grew to all kindred and self and near;
 The intimacy of God was everywhere,
 No veil was felt, no brute barrier inert,
 Distance could not divide, Time could not change.*

*A fire of passion burned in spirit-depths,
 A constant touch of sweetness linked all hearts,
 The throb of one adoration's single bliss
 In a rapt ether of undying love.*

*An inner happiness abode in all,
 A sense of universal harmonies,
 A measureless secure eternity
 Of truth and beauty and good and joy made one.*

*Here was the welling core of finite life;
 A formless spirit became the soul of form.*

Book II, 14

3

“You Have Come, I Am Happy”

An Interview with Dayanand

Dayanand: My contact with the Mother started in 1953, when I came here as a student of the *Post Graduate Course in Ecology* in the Botany department of Annamalai University. My professor Dr. T.C.N. Singh had brought us here, so that he could place the entire team who were working on “The Effect of Music on Plants” before the Mother. She used to encourage that experiment. The first time I saw Her in 1953 was in the playground where activities were going on. We stood in a line and I bowed down at Her Feet. She straight away gave me the *Hymn to the Mother Durga*, which was the first book I received from Her. I thought it was over with that. All the students who were with me left and I too was going out but just stood at the entrance to the playground and looked to my right,—by then She had moved from Her seat near the map to the classroom where She was taking the classes. As I stared, I saw a column of light and I was stuck to the place. Tears were rolling down my eyes; I could not move. I do not know how much time elapsed till somebody came and prompted me, “Come on, all the people have left.” So, that was my first contact with the Divine Mother. It started like that and never left me afterwards.

While I was studying I always kept a *blessing packet* with me all the time. After finishing my education at Dehradun I left for Chennai; there was a break— destiny had to work itself out. Then in 1963, I came with my wife Anjani and had darshan of the Mother. Later on, in '64, we came with Satya, our child. I got involved in Auroville at that stage, 64–65, without my knowing about Auroville. I didn't know about Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, I knew that the Mother was the Divine Mother—once and for

all I knew—not from the head, from the heart, that was all. The mental part I never knew.

In 63-64 Navajata called me and said that there is a project like this - Auroville project — and we have to buy land. "While you are on your tours would you like to go around, perambulate Puthurai and Pattanur areas and be of assistance and assess the land. So that was how the first contact with Auroville started. Every time I began tours it was planned in such a way that I was here in the night. I kept the car in Golconde and in the daytime went to Pattanur and perambulated the land. At that time it was presumed that Auroville would be surrounded by a large water-body—that is what the Mother wanted—and so Puthurai area was the first to be purchased. But later on because the area was too small, the location was shifted to Irumbai, which was spread over Idayanchavadi, Bommiarpalayam and Kottakarai villages.

In 1966 I was selected by the Government of Tamil Nadu under the Colombo Plan for a one year study at Oxford University. I chose as a special subject for my thesis 'Reclamation of Saline soils with special reference to Kaluveli swamp'. I chose the subject since I had been informed that the Mother had said that at some future date there was a likelihood of Olympics being held at Auroville and at that time reclamation of Kaluveli swamp would be useful.

On return from Oxford, I was welcomed with open arms by the Mother, when I went for *Pranam* (11-07-1967). She welcomed me with open arms with the words, "So you have come back, I am happy." I had no intention of resigning my job but something inside me prompted me to ask whether I should resign. Since my attempt to come on deputation was not approved by the Government, the Mother approved my resignation and offered to help financially for refunding the amount spent by the Government for my training in Oxford—I had taken the plunge.

One particular experience I would like to share. During my entire stay in Oxford, I had so regulated my life that at 6 am local time, I would sit in meditation. I had written to the Mother about this and She had blessed me. Throughout my entire stay I was conscious of the Presence; this is what kept me going.

Auroville office actually started where Purna Prema is now staying. We were the first people there—upstairs—and downstairs was the Auroville office. I was the first person to start the Auroville office. Thereafter Roger came and said that Indira Gandhi might be coming and the downstairs portion was made into an exhibition, to show to Indira Gandhi. The Auroville office functioned from that place for quite a long time till it shifted to beach office—when we got the building from Padmini.

My regular work in Auroville started straight away on my return from Oxford. I was looking after land survey, estate management, agriculture, water resource development etc. It was an exhilarating experience for me. I had three survey teams and we worked with meticulous care to mark out our lands with granite stones marked "AV". For the work, I had to perambulate, walk, and see that the stones were laid correctly. Every tree was enumerated. If there was anything interesting like seed, flowers or the soil of Auroville, — every Sunday I used to take them, to the Mother. She was delighted to see them. And we even had raised a crop of paddy in the Matrimandir area — a short term saline variety of paddy. I remember taking that paddy, in a white porcelain bowl. How She blessed it! Then, at that time, She wanted the planting of transformation trees — 24 in number, in Matrimandir area. Along with survey work, many things were going on side by side: development of the infrastructure, exploitation of water resources, —that is drilling a series of bore wells taking the water to different areas of Auroville, taking care of the estate, thousands of cashew and mango trees, Jackfruit trees, Palm trees, all the produce of the area etc. — Multiple sort of activities were going on. They were too complicated and very few people were there at that time. Actually the Mother told me, "You are doing too much work. So, you should not take up teaching in Auroville." (They asked me to teach also.) She said, "No." You see the infinite care the Divine Mother bestowed on you, to each individual person's physical needs — which is astounding. One day when we had gone to the Mother, Anjani told Her that I was not taking food properly. And I was amazed that She wrote a chit to Purna Prema to see that I got non-vegetarian food—chicken—for my

body and that continued for three months. That was Her level of concern for each and every individual.

Then we began doing different projects also, like the 'Saline water irrigation research project'. And the biggest project that Auroville had undertaken was the Farmers' Education and Training Project so that the local villagers were integrated with Auroville. Farmers from 30 villages, about 15,000 farmers, were trained in a very systematic manner so that they understood and got integrated to Auroville in some way or another. And it went on for five years.

Q: What about "Om" of Matrimandir.

There are hundreds of fossils [fossil: The remains (or an impression) of a plant or animal that existed in a past geological age and that has been excavated from the soil.] in Auroville, especially in the Eurobrindavan area. At the time of the inauguration of pillars, (She always used to write with brushes) She had put 'Om' on a fossil and sent it to Matrimandir. I do not know whether it is still there or not.

(.....) So far as I remember, it was put under the Mahalakshmi Pillar foundation.

Dayanand: Well, the fossil will be there... One interesting thing is that there was nothing to worry about. As I said, if anybody asks me whether I have lived in heaven, I say I have lived in heaven on earth. From 1963 up to 1973, definitely I lived in heaven. I had no worry at all. For any problem you can run to the Mother and ask Her. She would sort out everything. So, I say that I had the experience of living in heaven. It was a wonderful occasion; supramental had practically descended on earth.

Q: (.....) I think the Mother gave you in 1971, "a sweet year" card. Can you tell something about it?

Dayanand: Why can't you take it? I am still keeping it. Some other things I have already handed over to the Auroville archives. Things regarding Ganeshji, I gave to Kusumben. This is still with me; it has to go to Auroville. Someday I can hand it over when the new Secretary comes. That was for the Sri Aurobindo's Centenary. It started in 1971; Mother was in such a fantastic state, a joyous state. And that was how it should be celebrated and that is why she wrote "A sweet year". She gave

it to Champaklalji. I would like to hand it over as soon as possible — it belongs to Auroville and it does not belong to me. It was meant for Auroville. It was a sweet year, 1971.

A tragic incident happened in the beginning of Auroville because the people there were not used to vehicles going into their village. It was an early experience to them. So whenever a motor vehicle went through the village, children would run after it. Then X started the school there in Idayanchavadi. I think the school van ran over the child and the child died. The Mother wanted to know how to sort out the situation at my level. I said that the only thing left was compensation. (You cannot compensate loss of life, it is a ticklish issue.) You must remember that we are talking about the 60's. Then I gave my assessment. I told the Mother, "In my assessment we can give Rs. 5,000/- to the parents of the child." She took Rs. 5,000/- and wrote "Dayanand" on the envelope, put it there, and said, "You go personally and in the presence of the entire village, give Rs. 5,000/- to the parents of the child. Say we are sorry and it will not happen again." I remember going to Idayanchavadi. And in the presence of the entire village, on the main road, I gave Rs. 5,000/- to the parents and the matter was settled.

When the time for Auroville Administration Committee had come, Navajata informed me that he had a particular person in mind to represent the committee, whether I had any objection. I said I had no objection. But when he returned from the Mother, She had suggested my name instead of that particular person. That is how I got into the CAA. (Comité Administrative d'Auroville)

There are many more things to share, perhaps at a later date and time.

All I have stated is a recollection from memory. There will be mistakes for which you will have to excuse me.

*One-pointed to the immaculate Delight,
Questing for God as for a splendid prey,
He mounted burning like a cone of fire.*

Going Down the Memory Lane Relating to the Divine Mother

An Interview with
Dr. Suresh Dey & Mrs. Tripti Dey

Beena: There are moments when this happens—when you feel like leaving and you feel, what is this? Where is Auroville? And while expressing to Syamala one day about the possibility of publishing (in a book form) the experiences of the devotees who had met the Mother or had worked under Her instructions, we felt that it was like “Food for the Soul”. At the same time the task is like.... “Pumping the Air”!

To organize something on a large scale it takes some time and serious work, and it is not easy.

Today, I would like both of you to join us and tell us about the Mother, going down your memory lane.

Dr. Dey: Let me please clarify—our treasures are quite limited; of course, my wife and myself had *Darshan* of the Divine Mother a number of times—i.e., both special-darshan in her room as well at the general balcony-darshans. In a way, there was a sweet psychic connection with Auroville, because in the year 1968, we had our first visit to Auroville during its ‘Foundation Ceremony’—a glittering ceremony and truly unforgettable. We recall with the deepest gratitude that it was only the Mother’s miracle that took us there to Auroville at the time of its spectacular manifestation on Earth.

We had come to Pondicherry, for the first time, from Orissa. At that time we got the opportunity of visiting Pondy unexpectedly because we suddenly made up our minds after

hearing some details from an officer of the State Government, about the cleanliness, the general discipline, the flower decorations, and the Sports activities etc. which impress all visitors to Sri Aurobindo Ashram. When we heard at Pondicherry that some big event was going to take place at Auroville on the 28th February, 1968, we tried to contact some known person who had the experience of visiting Pondy earlier. On the 27th Feb. morning we could know from one such person, who was a Chief Engineer from Orissa, that he was planning to visit Auroville the next day. We proposed to share the taxi with him and he agreed. Naturally we did not try for any other transport arrangement and remained busy for discovering the new Ashram slowly; needless to say that we had a tough time because everyone seemed to be too busy to answer our simplistic questions and persistent queries. Added to our perplexed state of mind, while trying to be acquainted with the new environment, our daughter, Leena (a naughty child of about 2½ years then) was getting more and more restless. In a situation like this, news came almost like a bolt from the blue, late at 10 p.m. of the 27th night that we had to make our own transport arrangement because the aforesaid Chief Engineer had changed his plans for the next morning's trip to Auroville! Crest fallen, as we were, there was nothing that we could do in the night. Next morning we started moving desperately on foot thinking that we would get some guidance from some local devotees, at least to move in the direction of Auroville. No taxi or auto with vacant seats was in sight! Moreover, it appeared to me that all roads (on that fateful day) were leading to Auroville. And nobody, on that busy unknown street that we were trying to cross with desperate looks, had the time to answer our anxious queries. At that critical juncture, one car suddenly screeched to stop near us! Mr. Sarat Patnaik (well-known as a photographer, he was working in the Bureau Central of the Ashram in those days—and we had just met him as a new friend after our arrival from Orissa), who was seated in the car, by the side of Mr. Kameshwar Rao, the then chief of the Bureau Central, invited us to step into the car for going to Auroville! After our quick introduction with Mr. Rao, the car started speeding towards Auroville's majestic amphitheatre, decorated like a beautiful

royal bride, for the grand inauguration ceremony. During those golden moments of our happy journey, we felt as if the Divine Mother had sent something like a *Pushpak Vimaan* (a flying-chariot of Indian mythology) for us to be lifted from Pondicherry to Auroville! One may call it fanciful imagination or a magic story, but it is a fact that but for the intervention of the sweet Mother's unexpected Grace, we would have missed the grand occasion of the birth of the *City of Dawn* in a matter of five seconds only!

Beena: Can you describe the event since I was not there—the inauguration ceremony?

Dr. Dey: What I remember is the 'fairyland'-type of environment, the enlivening multitude and the most fascinating, colourful ceremony—the young boys and girls marching, with wonderful uplifting music, in a spirit of grand Harmony. It was such a well-organized ceremony to pour morsels of holy mother-earth (symbolically), brought from each country, into the white lotus-bud shaped marble urn, erected aesthetically at the centre of the lovely amphitheatre! As we were fully charmed to witness the most spectacular sight of the national flags of different countries fluttering in the morning breeze, the sweet, enthralling voice of the Divine Mother was broadcast by the All India Radio, Pondicherry. She read out the Charter of Auroville with a majestic voice which sounded like a Celestial Proclamation! Truly the entire vision, the concept, the experiments and the ground realities relating to Auroville have no parallel in the world; it can't have any comparison at all! Auroville has always been a fond Dream; we would like to visit it again and again, particularly the Matrimandir, the Amphitheatre and Savitri Bhavan.

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Dr. Dey (continues): Incidentally, we had taken Krishni, our granddaughter, a blooming child of about 2½ years, along with her mother (Leena), to the amphitheatre of Auroville to attend the pre-dawn bonfire, with meditation etc. on the New Year's

Day of 1995—with a special mission, i.e. for the sacred ceremony of the commencement of her educational career. We remember that the child's mother, Leena had begun her educational career at Baripada (in Orissa), way back in August, 1969, after receiving the holy Blessings from the Divine Mother, in Her own handwriting. This traditional Indian ceremony for Krishni could have been performed at some famous temple in Pondicherry or even at home, i.e. *Aditi*, the official residence of the Secretary, Auroville Foundation, where we were staying at that time. But we purposely chose the New Year's Dawn at Auroville for invoking the Blessings of Mother *Mahasaraswati* for the child. We made her write *OM* on a piece of white paper after touching her hands and the new pen on the most beautiful floral decoration (on the floor surrounding the marble-white bud of the amphitheatre), made by the devotees of Auroville, with the Sanskrit symbol of *OM*, aesthetically designed at the centre. I believe, this decision and the arrangements were certainly ordained by the Divine Mother!

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Dr. Dey (continues): Some facts about a special publication , titled, '*Auroville, The City of Dawn*'—which was brought out by the Sri Aurobindo Centre of Sri Aurobindo Society, located at Adhchini, New Delhi (in 1995), may be mentioned here. The specially designed, voluminous magazine was arranged to be published entirely under the leadership of Dr. K.M. Agarwala (erstwhile Freedom Fighter and famous Homeopath Doctor, who was in-charge of the Sri Aurobindo Centre for a long time); he had put me at no.1 of the Editorial Board, in consultation with all concerned. When this idea was mooted for bringing out a comprehensive publication on Auroville, some eyebrows were raised in the growing international city, particularly by those who were highly critical of Sri Aurobindo Society! Naturally, Dr. Agarwala was greatly shocked, especially because nobody in Auroville (and not even any one at the Sri Aurobindo Society headquarters) had to spend a single rupee for this. When he consulted me, I clearly told him that the Divine Mother had given him the role of a 'Bridge over the emotional divide' between

Auroville and Sri Aurobindo Society and that I would carry out my additional duties and editorial responsibilities (at that time I was posted as the Secretary, Auroville Foundation, on behalf of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India) without any fear or favour or prejudice. It is now a fact of recent history that it was a life-time achievement of Dr. Agarwala, as the magazine has been liked by one and all, both inside and outside Auroville. Moreover, the then Honourable *Rashtrapati ji* had received the first copy of the magazine from Dr. Agarwala. Not only this, the then Hon'ble President of India had himself contributed the first descriptive essay on Auroville for our magazine, which is truly a rare event! I express my deepest Gratitude to the Divine Mother for Her protection, guidance and Benedictions...and also my hearty Thanks to all those Aurovilians who had helped and cooperated with the Editorial Board of this special publication.

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Dr. Dey (continues): During my Govternment service (in the I.P.S.) I was posted at different places of our country. We had the good fortune of starting some Sri Aurobindo Study Circles, with the Blessings of the Mother, mostly in Orissa.

Sri Babaji Maharaj and Prof. Prapatti (who are no more physically) had given us a lot of support and guidance from the Ashram for those *Pathachakras* (study circles). Even when I was posted at Kalimpong, in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, we had organized a seminar and book exhibition relating to Sri Aurobindo's *Purna Yoga*, after receiving the Blessings of the Divine Mother. When posted in Kolkata, the cooperation and encouragement received from *Himanshuda* (*late Himanshu Ku. Niyogi*) and other devotees of Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, Kolkata, enabled us to organize and present a Dance-Drama on Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, during the birth-centenary celebrations of the Divine Mother (21/2/1978). With this backdrop, a few words about the open-air *Savitri* study circle and the gradual blossoming of the *SAVITRI BHAVAN* at Auroville may be quite relevant.

On 24/11/1994 (the *Darshan-Divas* celebrated at the *Ashram*,

Auroville and other Centres to commemorate the Victory or *Siddhi*, in Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga), Ms. Shraddhavan, Mr. Helmut, Mr. Martin S., Lakshminarayanji, Mahendrabhai, Narayanbhai, Dr. J.P. Singh, Ms. Tripti (my wife) and myself, joined hands with some aspiring devotees like Ms. Aster Patel, Ms. Syamala, Mr. Varadarajan, Mr. Srinivas Murty, Ms. Chitra, Mr. Elumalai, Ms. Tapas, Ms. Lakshman Behn, Ms. Nargis, Ms. Bhavna and also a few others interested in the regular study of Savitri; thus having formed the dedicated assembly, we launched the weekly Savitri study-circle of Auroville, with the Mother's music, meditation, devotional songs etc. in the CIS of Bharat Nivas. Gradually we were attracted by the scenic beauty of the open-air Nature and shifted our venue to the present site near Bharat Nivas, where the beautiful *Savitri Bhavan* complex is now coming up in phases. There the open-air SAVITRI study-circle, in the lap of Mother-Nature, used to be conducted by us in a very simple manner; the solemn silence of the place and the sacred recitation of passages from Savitri by each one of us (by turn, and to the best of our ability) were simply soul-stirring! Apart from our occasional attempts to discuss amongst ourselves some portions without any intellectual veneer whatsoever, we used to invite some reputed speakers from Pondicherry (such as, Dr. Nirodbaran, Prof. Arabinda Basu, Shraddhalu, Prof. Nadkarni, Prof. Manoj Das and others) to deliver talks on Savitri. Meanwhile, as we started dreaming about the Savitri Bhavan somewhere near the Bharat Nivas, a few Aurovilians expressed their reservations on the project saying that the proposed study centre, housed in a mansion called 'Savitri Bhavan', would turn into just another centre for 'religious' activities. Apart from this, some Aurovilians opposed the idea of locating the *Bhavan* near the Bharat Nivas! Needless to say, the all-merciful Grace of the Divine Mother swept away all these objections in a trice and we started preparing for the foundation-laying ceremony to be held on the 24th November, 1995, with Niroddha as the chief guest. Thus, exactly after one year of the commencement of the weekly Study Circle, the foundation-laying ceremony for the 'Savitri Bhavan' was held in a very simple, solemn and befitting manner. After this sacred event, the weekly study-circle continued in a temporary shed till the grand blossoming of the Savitri

Bhavan complex took place (with its day-to-day multifarious activities and interesting programmes), owing to the pioneering zeal and leadership of some keen aspirants like Ms. Shraddhavan, Mr. Helmut, Lakshminarayanji and a few other dedicated souls of Auroville.

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Dr. Dey (continues): I may mention here very briefly the most serene, sublime and fulfilling event of my life when my wife, our daughter Leena and myself received the direct, personal Benedictions of the sweet Divine Mother, in Her room, in the first week of March, 1968, during the occasion, usually called the 'Special- Darshan'. After sending our written prayers to the Divine Mother and after spending several days of quiet and tearful prayers, one day Sri M.P. Pandit informed us that the Mother had very kindly granted us the permission to have the 'Special-Darshan' in Her room. On the previous day of the appointed *Darshan*, we remained quite busy in preparing ourselves for the grand event. During those days, a special (make-shift) sale-counter had been put up near the *Ashram*'s notice board for the convenience of the large number of visitors and pilgrims. There my wife insisted again and again (rather unexpectedly) to purchase one gold ring, with the Mother's picture on the ring-stone, for myself, so that we could take it with us for the gracious touch by the sweet Mother on the next day. In the beginning I hesitated a lot because I was instinctively averse to the practice of adorning any gold (or other precious) ornament by male persons. Ultimately I yielded to my wife's advice and the ring was purchased. Next day, during those unforgettable and immortal moments of our special *Darshan*, I placed the ring on my open and extended palms and looked at the sweet Divine Mother imploringly, expecting the sacred moment of Her most gracious, personal touch. But something happened then far beyond our human expectations. Sri Champaklal who was standing on the right side of the Divine Mother intervened in a very pleasant and endearing manner; he took the ring from my extended palm and handed it over to the Mother with a smiling and prayerful gesture to do the

needful. Then the sweet Divine Mother, with all Her celestial and earthly affection for a child, put the ring on my ring-finger of the right hand! I felt that those celebrated and auspicious moments of my life had gifted me the most unforgettable occasion of my 'coronation' as a child-King in the lap of the Divine Mother!

* * *

There is one more interesting anecdote which may be mentioned here. For the same day of our special-*Darshan* we had purchased two toffee boxes, with the fond hope that the Mother would accept one and touch the other one for distribution as 'Prasad' later on. As we were preparing to go upstairs to reach the Mother's room very carefully (with a lot of suspense, knowing not what to do or how to behave before the Mother), we noticed that our daughter, Leena (then a naughty child of 2½ years) was getting more and more restless. We made efforts to conceal the toffee boxes from her sight lest she would scream and try to grab one; but this is exactly what happened at that critical moment! As her screaming voice disturbed the sacred silence of the Meditation Hall and the staircase leading to the Mother's room, I thought that we would be debarred from entering into the Mother's room. Therefore I took the fidgety child on my shoulders and did an about-turn in the middle of the staircase, with the idea of handing over our daughter to Saratbhai who was waiting downstairs. On seeing my desperate condition, Champaklalji who was standing near the entrance door of the Mother's room (and looked like a Himalayan Yogi) intervened with a very kind gesture. He gave loud and clear instructions saying (during those days he was not maintaining silence) that we need not feel nervous at all and that the child need not be sent away. Needless to say, those kind assurances came to us like a Heavenly boon! Thereafter we had a very wonderful and fulfilling *Special Darshan* of the sweet Divine Mother, who not only gave Leena a beautiful flower along with Her nectareous smile, but She also gave her complete freedom to romp about in Her room till we finished our *Darshan-prayers*. It was a miracle of sorts that the child did not create

any problem during those golden moments of our lives although she could have pulled down certain things or demanded the toffee box or even disturbed the flower arrangements playfully!

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Beena: What was your experience of Auroville as a person in-charge of Auroville Foundation, on behalf of the Government of India?

Dr. Dey: My selection and appointment as the Secretary of Auroville Foundation was due to the unusual Grace of the Divine Mother. All other officers posted before me and after me were (and the present incumbent too) from the Indian Administrative Service, whereas I was picked up, on central deputation basis, from the Orissa cadre of the I.P.S (Indian Police Service) which is under the parent Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

During my tenure of two years as the Secretary (before I retired from the All India Service on attaining the age of superannuation), my experience at Auroville was quite thrilling and elevating, but often packed with suspense and legal complications. We shall never forget our physical, mental and psychic proximity to the Matrimandir, the (rising institutional complex of) Savitri Bhavan, our hearty involvement in the cultural programmes at the CIS of Bharat Nivas, the Pitanga Hall and above all our spirited participation in the musical Prayers and Meditation sessions at the Vérité settlement, at the two Sri Ganesh Temples in different locations, also under the famous banyan tree and at the amphitheatre, on special occasions. Apart from my attendance of the Sanskrit language class at Bharat Nivas, both of us were participating in the evening music classes soulfully.

Of course, I had to "face the music" on the administrative front in so far as the day to day official interactions were concerned. However, I received wonderful support from the staff-members of our Foundation Office at Auroville and many Aurovilians too. But unfortunately, there were a few Aurovilians who had some misconceptions and a lot of misunderstanding

about Visa-renewal matters and the Central Government's Audit procedures. Naturally, it was my lot to face the cacophony and the cackle of those inveterate critics of the Govt., there being no other (senior-level) representative of the HRD Ministry of the Central Government on the spot. Despite the turmoil faced by us, I carried on my duties by offering everything at the Lotus-Feet of the Divine Mother. I observed that while more than half of the Aurovilians were genuinely committed to the Charter of Auroville and Integral Yoga, a few others had more time for groupism, lobbying, litigation, etc.

Beena: Groupism for survival or

Varadarajan: It looks you were in a very difficult position.

Dr. Dey : Before I joined at Auroville (on central deputation basis), I knew that I would have to face many odd and challenging situations there because it was not like any Government department or any Public Sector organization, under a Ministry of the Government of India. After gaining the experience of the new kind of work there and after observing the anti-establishment psychology among some influential Aurovilians, I wondered quite often as to why the Government's presence was needed there? Does it not appear to be like a funny situation where a bicycle is provided to a ten-year lad (with full normal growth) by his parents, with the instruction not to venture out with his bicycle! Which other spiritual (or religious or yoga-based) organization, having international ramifications, demands or depends upon such props?

Syamala: The Divine Mother had mentioned about the 'Divine Anarchy'.

Beena: Yes, in the light of this, would you like to say something about the form of organization for Auroville and the style of living?

Dr. Dey: As far as I know there is no short-cut or a cake-walk to reach the exalted and sublime status or the state-of-being

called the “Divine Anarchy”. No human organization (for administration) can be adequate to meet the requirements of Auroville which has already advanced on the path of evolution, even though imperceptibly.... And this progress has been possible due to the Grace of the Divine Mother. Since there are quite a number of ‘Gems’ and gifted children of the Divine Mother who are staying and working at Auroville, it should not be difficult for them to visualize the shape of future things, which are to be worked out, in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s words of perennial Wisdom.... “.... A greater whole being, whole knowledge, whole power is needed, to weld all into a greater unity of whole life.” This has to be achieved, in the Auroville Experiment, by sacrificing not only individual ego, but also by transcending the collective ego. Then only “the creative harmonizing light of the spirit” (words of Sri Aurobindo) and the *Shakti of the Supreme Divine Mother* will guide each and every moment of the consecrated living and dynamic endeavour of the seekers, Yoga-aspirants and workers of Auroville.

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE

.....*all is their play:*
This whole wide world is only he and she.

“She Was Like a Mother, Not an Awesome Figure”

An Interview with Prof. Kittu Reddy

Q: *Can you tell us something about the days when you came to the Ashram as a young boy?*

Kittu Reddy: Except on the darshan days, we used to meet the Mother four or five times a day: in the morning ‘balcony darshan’, then again at ‘9 o’ clock Blessings’—when she used to give tomatoes or fruits to the children—at midday ‘vegetable darshan’ and often in the evenings at the Playground. So, four times a day. This was from the year 1943 to 1958.

Q: *What was the place of children in the Ashram in early days?*

Kittu Reddy: Children were an integral part of the Ashram, Mother gave a lot of time and interest to the children, and she knew each one individually.

When as children, once Khiku (Aster’s brother) and myself were talking aloud near the meditation hall among ourselves—apparently quite loudly. Suddenly from upstairs, Puranji came down to enquire who were talking as Sri Aurobindo asked the question: “Who are those two boys who are talking at 60 words a second?” It was reported that one was Indra Sen’s son and the other Narayan Reddy’s son.

V: Both have made their mark, one in the Indian Foreign Service and you as an excellent exponent of Indian Culture and Political Science in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s teaching.

Kittu Reddy: Regarding the vegetable darshan... the Mother used to come down—at the staircase near Nirod-da’s room—and the vegetables would be put. The Mother used to inspect them, enquire about the quantity: like 20 kgs of this vegetable or 50

kgs of that fruit etc. That is how she encouraged the growing of vegetables and fruits in the Ashram. Then when the darshan took place children could still be around. And it so happened that one day during the darshan I was playing. I did not see: somebody was chasing me right up to that area. Suddenly I saw the Mother. I just stopped: could not go forward or backward and was expecting to get a scolding. Instead of that, the Mother called me and very affectionately gave me a flower.

A gentleman who was staying in what is now the Bulletin Distribution Room — his name is Suddhanand Bharati—used to bring everyday a poem in French; he used to read it out to the Mother. That day Mother asked me to read the poem. I read it quite well. She was very appreciative and asked me to come everyday from next day onwards. I used to go to her everyday to read the French poem. So that was the beginning of a very intense relationship with the Mother, intense and very intimate.

V: You are in the Ashram for a long time from your childhood. We would be happy if you can share something with us.

Kittu Reddy: Mother took intense interest in every child. Whenever we went wrong, she would pull us up. If we did well in sports or any activity, she would appreciate us. She was like a mother, not an awesome figure. I can say she was the one person to whom I could tell everything with the absolute certainty that I will not be misunderstood.

With Sri Aurobindo, I had a relationship but an extremely intimate inner relationship.

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Kittu Reddy: The Mother always told us: "Whatever is pleasant or unpleasant and painful, make it a means of becoming more conscious and making the necessary progress. Inside is much more important than outside and act accordingly."

*A friend and yet too great wholly to know,
She walked in their front towards a greater light,
Their leader and queen over their hearts and souls,
One close to their bosoms, yet divine and far.*

6

“Lustrosly White”: Remembering Sri Aurobindo

Shyam Sunder

When Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry in 1910 some of his companions from Calcutta days came to stay with him. They lived like friends, companions, a sort of bohemian life sharing the same facilities in common, even to the extent of using a common towel for the bath.

True, Sri Aurobindo was respected by them all; he had an aura of greatness, height and aloofness even at Calcutta, and he was respected the way a colossus would be, so to say. That respect did not manifest in the daily behavior, it was not a respect that a master of yoga gets from his disciples and followers, a respect given by man to a divinity.

It was left to the Mother to open the eyes of the inmates of Sri Aurobindo's household to see the divinity of Sri Aurobindo. This the Mother could do after her second arrival at Pondicherry in 1920.

* * *

I went to Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry for the first time in February, 1949. I had the first darshan then. On my return my father asked me about Sri Aurobindo's complexion. When I said “lustrosly white”, he remarked that during his Bengal days, it was a bit darkish, but the complexion of yogis has been known to change. An uncle of mine also spoke similarly about him.

* * *

In 1960s Sri Aurobindo's devotees at Calcutta were anxious to acquire the house where Sri Aurobindo was born in 1872. There was a lot of controversy about the identification of the correct house as there had been a lot of changes in the house numbers, names of roads etc. by the Corporation since 1872, not to speak of varying legends about the birthplace itself. Ultimately the Mother approved of the acquisition of one of the buildings, which had been since named Sri Aurobindo Bhavan. A very significant remark of the Mother was narrated by Himanshuda, when the search was going on. She had said that if she went to Calcutta, she would recognize every inch of the ground where Sri Aurobindo had trod.

* * *

THEY SAW HIM EVERYWHERE

Soon after his release from Alipore Jail, where he had spent a year as prisoner, Sri Aurobindo addressed a public gathering at Uttarpara. There he spoke of his spiritual experiences:

“... (*In the court*) I looked and it was not the Magistrate whom I saw, it was Vasudeva, it was Narayana who was sitting there on the Bench. I looked at the Prosecuting Counsel and it was not the Counsel for the Prosecution that I saw; it was Sri Krishna who sat there, it was my Lover and Friend who sat there and smiled.”

That was on 30th May 1909.

About five years later, the Mother's diary entry for 'Karikal, 13 April 1914, says:

“All is beautiful, harmonious and calm, all is full of Thee. Thou shinest in the dazzling sun, Thou makest Thyself felt in the sweet breeze that blows, Thou makest Thyself manifest in our hearts and livest in all beings. There is no animal, no plant that does not speak to me of Thee and Thy name is written on all I look at ...”

Even the Little Sparrow Was Very Important

Richard

I would like to begin with a little-known passage written by the Mother, it is part of a series of visions described by her and published in the Bulletin where she describes the meeting of herself with the soul who was to share her work completely (Sri Aurobindo)—it is very poetic, very short and very beautiful also.

*In silence they exchanged the depths of their souls and thoughts.
In silence they spoke of the greatness of the work to be done
And at the splendour of the victory to come
Of which the dazzling radiance about him seems a glorious
pledge.*

I would now like to describe the Darshan, as I experienced, at the age of eleven and twelve, while going before the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Darshan day was a very special time for everyone, children and sadhaks. It must have been even more special for adults. We children looked forward to this day for though we saw the Mother very often everyday we saw Sri Aurobindo only on Darshan days. We had a day off from school, the day before we had Darshan day. The next day was also a holiday. It was called 'Garland Day' since Mother gave back garlands of Devotion (Tulsi) which were offered on Darshan Day. So we had plenty, plenty of time to be collected, to be prepared for the Darshan. It was an experience that was impossible to put into words. Let me describe it as a child as I felt. The line would start from the meditation hall; before that we would be sitting quietly as we are sitting here now, in three small groups and when the line started we would go up the

staircase, the same staircase that we use today, and in fact the same staircase we always sat on and waited for the Mother or went up for our birthday; but somehow on Darshan day that staircase seemed so different—it seemed as though you were entering into something so unexpected – we couldn't recognize things that we saw normally everyday. We entered through the Darshan room by the way that nowadays we exit, facing directly towards the Darshan – as a child I couldn't see anything being behind with all the grown-ups in front. But the feeling of entering the long room, the hall, was of such coolness and such solid peace. In my simple way, I can only compare the feeling to being in a cool forest. We would come forward; it was a continuous movement—no pranam, no waiting—it was just a constant gradual movement, in front of Mother and Sri Aurobindo. As a child my father always used to say: "First see the Mother and then Sri Aurobindo." It was his way, and the way most thought in those days. Seeing the Mother gives you such joy, to see the radiance; more radiant than you ever saw her in normal times or on birthdays or blessings in the evenings. She was really majestic and regal. Seated beside Sri Aurobindo, it seems that she had become different; she had become, if you may use the word, Divine. Even that doesn't really express the feelings one got. Sri Aurobindo was massive and silent and elite, but very gentle, soft, there was nothing hard in that elite ness – his eyes would be fixed on what I don't know. Not impersonal, but also not personal like the Mother. I would like to describe to you also..... because in that way the time....., Mother would go into trance but she would suddenly stop in the middle of a particular movement and she would be somewhere else—we would call it Mother's trance. And this happened even in Darshan time and when this happened during Darshan, it seemed at once she was completely in some other sphere. Then at those moments Sri Aurobindo would complement her and become so sweet and smiling and close. He was taking Mother's role when she was in a trance.

It seemed so beautiful, and this feeling a little before of being in their presence was so strong that when we went out and then passed through the corridor in which now you come in, we would be completely lost to everything—I remember; when

you go down the stairs, you meet another person coming up who is your friend or acquaintance, but you would not feel any kind of recognition, you would be lost in the beautiful presence which would accompany you downstairs. The message would be given by some senior sadhaks and one would mechanically take the message and go out in that dream-state and go home and even at home one could feel that presence; maybe later we would read the message for the day. It was this experience that I wanted to share with you.

But I would also like to share with you the experience of the Darshan that Kumudben was telling us about, before Sri Aurobindo's accident when it was an individual Darshan. The Mother made the list and each person was called according to that order. You would enter before Mother and Sri Aurobindo and first of all sadhaks would kneel down before the Mother, and, bending his head, would wait for the Mother to put her hand on the head and keep it there as long as she did not lift it up. Then one would move to Sri Aurobindo, bow down to him and when he put his hand on the head, one would remain as long as he kept his hand there and then gently took it up. These older sadhaks who described to me this Darshan, said then one would put their head between Mother and Sri Aurobindo and both would together put their hands on the head and one would remain until they removed their hands. This, they said, was the most beautiful experience of the Darshan and I'm sure that when I share these words we too are experiencing the inner state and power such a blessing has.

I would also like to say a strange observation that always surprised me. We see in a picture that Mother and Sri Aurobindo are inside a room and the doorway is clearly visible. But believe me; I could never believe that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were in a separate room. Whenever I went to Darshan, it was as though they were right up close. There was a long box placed in front in which garlands would be placed.... It was such a living presence and so near.

There were beautiful aspects of external works of Sri Aurobindo which some of you may know and some may not; touching incidents of his relation with the Mother and her relation with Sri Aurobindo, in which she describes certain

beautiful things. Let me tell you a few of these stories. The Mother tells of a cyclone; the wind and rain was pouring and she rushed to Sri Aurobindo's room to close the windows because he would be writing and he might not have noticed the cyclone. And when she went in, she suddenly felt such peace, such stillness that the rain did not enter, though the wind was raging outside and the windows were open. This took her by surprise.

Another incident she mentioned is speaking about a person's character. She remarked that if you open somebody's drawer, you get a very good idea about his personality; but there is an exception—Sri Aurobindo. On Sri Aurobindo's table everything looked in complete disorder, but he knew exactly where everything was. And if somebody moved a paper, a pen or something, he would say: "*This is not where I left*".

There is a sweet story told by Pujalal. He had the permission to clean the room of Sri Aurobindo early in the morning at five and Mother instructed him in detail what he should do. He should not disturb Sri Aurobindo in any way; he should not even look at Sri Aurobindo; he had to do all his work as though nobody was there. But one day Mother came and met him at the door. She was waiting for him and she said, "*Today be very careful. On the top of the central door, there is a little sparrow which has come to rest and you have to be very careful not to wake it*". Here, I say, the mercy and compassion of our Lord is so great that even the little sparrow that had come and was sitting there was very, very important.

Mother spoke of Sri Aurobindo as the perfect gentleman—she said she had met many, many, men in her life but she never met a perfect gentleman until she met Sri Aurobindo. She didn't comment further on that but I would like to tell you that Sri Aurobindo rarely spoke in the first person—he may have written so. When he spoke, he would simply say, "Can this letter be posted?" "Could this be done?" It was as though he was requesting something and as rightly said, he never raised his voice, except on an occasion when somebody was angry with the Mother, and Sri Aurobindo shouted, "Who is this?" That person almost fell down the stairs!

A very old sadhak who was close to Mother and Sri

Aurobindo, Bulada, used to call the relation between the Mother and Sri Aurobindo as a “mutual admiration society”—Sri Aurobindo admired the Mother and Mother was all praise and respect for Sri Aurobindo.

“Without him, I exist not. Without me he is unmanifest.”
The Mother

Mother also described how Sri Aurobindo feels a person—a letter would come saying that such and such a person was ill or some person was troubled with some bad vibration. This was brought to the notice of Sri Aurobindo. The Mother used to say: *I saw a hand come out and simply two fingers fixed that fault or vibration or illness and just removed it and the person would feel completely relieved.* This was of course the Mother’s subtle vision. We have the evidence in the Agenda; we know that.... Mother describing the years spent when she was with Sri Aurobindo said: *“I was so secure, I could do anything, try anything, I didn’t even have to question; I knew that Sri Aurobindo was there and that was enough for me.”*

*The Force in her drew earth’s subhuman broods;
And to her spirit’s large and free delight
She joined the ardent-hued magnificent lives
Of animal and bird and flower and tree.
They answered to her with the simple heart.*

“I Had Her Darshan”

Jayant Thakkar

I started my life in a poor family. By the grace of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, I am here since the last 30 years.

I was in jail for 15 months in Sabarmati, Ahmedabad, as a freedom fighter. Leaving my medical studies I had decided myself that I would never enter politics —that was not my cup of tea. In jail, by god's grace I met saintly people. I could read Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sri Aurobindo etc. I was in touch with some good people who showed me what greatness is, what is divine and how to change one's life. You cannot change anybody; we have to change ourselves first. During jail life, I could meet some great people and that is what brought me to my first darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in 1946. I had come to Trichy on service and my friend was a devotee of the Mother. His son and I came to Pondicherry and had the darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I had to look after my young brothers and sisters and so started my business. By their grace I became a successful businessman. My business dealt with surgical items and I used to supply surgical items to Ashram dispensary, nursing home and Trésor Nursing Home.

So, all those years I was outside, I was visiting and had good relations with the Ashram. I used to see the Mother in the play ground. On other occasions also I had Her darshan. I came finally here only in '73. In the Mother's life time I could come here and She put me here and I am happy here enjoying Her grace. I have no complaints. At 82, I have good health and peace of mind in this place.

We in Auroville have passed through great turmoil in the last 30 years. I have come to the conclusion that if we really believe

in, trust in and surrender to the Mother,—without using our mind,—simply, without ego, with humility, love and affection, without trying to find fault with others, we can solve our problems. In spite of all these troubles, I can assure you and I feel that the Mother is working through us, and I have seen the progress throughout.

Just be conscious not to create disharmony. Things will happen—we may like them or not. We may not be able to understand what is going on now, but we must have faith that the Mother is working and something good will come out of it. With constant faith and surrender to the divine Mother every thing will turn out to be good, because She is doing it through all of us.

That is my sharing with you.

No VIP Treatment

N. K. Krishnamurti

Fifty-three years ago, in 1950, as a teenager I came to Pondicherry for the first time and had the Darshan of the Lord. I did not know much about Pondicherry. I went to my friend's house in Cuddalore (a town close to Pondicherry) and was escorted to Pondicherry on 23rd November, evening. I stayed overnight and the next day was the Darshan day. In those days one had to get prior permission (of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother) for the Darshan. It was very difficult to get the permission. My friends at Madras tried many times; they could not get any answer. I was very much discouraged but some friends told me, "You must try. You must be open to it. It is they who decide it, not you." So I wrote a letter—on 1st week of November, 1950—just a letter: "I am very keen to have the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo; please permit me." That was all. After a few days I received a postcard—it was by M.P. Pandit, signed by Nolini Kanta Gupta—informing me my number etc. for the Darshan. I had that card with me on the Darshan day morning and I was thinking: "I don't know anything about Sri Aurobindo!" Yet, at 2 o' clock or 1.45 pm I was standing in the queue for Darshan. Those days the Darshan was in the afternoon. It was very surprising for me to see that the Governor of Madras, the Maharajah of Bhavanagar and his family were standing behind me. I wondered, "No VIP treatment!" As a man coming from Madras, one knew the politics; the VIP's were always received first. And here there was nothing like that! They were surprised at this.

Slowly the queue moved to the Meditation Hall, up the staircase and then turned right; straight we went to Sri

Aurobindo's Darshan. I saw a gólden Purusha! Sri Aurobindo had a big towel on his left shoulder and his right hand finger had a ring; he had a kerchief on that right hand. He looked straight and one went into His eyes. I was a little surprised. [overwhelmed by emotion, halts the narration shortly] Excuse me, recalling things... I felt something going in but could not open for it—it was.... but I was thrilled completely. And through the next room, the middle room, we came out. I had experienced something unusual which was unexpected; I told many people in Madras. All these years whenever friends ask me, "Have you seen Sri Aurobindo?" and I say, "Yes," they exclaim: "Really?" I say, "Yes, very much really—because I could see the golden Purusha. I cannot forget it." The same thing had been told by Kapali Sastri. "When I saw you,"—he wrote in his correspondence with Sri Aurobindo—"you were very dark and thin. Now I see you golden. Is it due to Yoga?" Sri Aurobindo replied, "Yes." So by his Yoga he had completely turned the complexion of the body into a golden one (and white beard). He was more like a Rishi. That is always in my mind. I think Krishnalal has drawn a picture of Sri Aurobindo—*Hiranmaya Purusha*. He had the same concept; it is really a remarkable one. I think I am fortunate to have had that—nothing more. It was a rare opportunity. Many people tried, they could not get it. They were more religious than me! And no recommendation those days—every individual had to write for the permission. I had not read much except that I knew that Sri Aurobindo was a very great person. That made me try. And for that sincerity He answered me with the permission for Darshan. I was told that the letters requesting for permission were taken to the Mother or Sri Aurobindo. He must say, nod 'yes'; then only the permission was given.

After the Darshan, in the evening, I went for the meditation at the Playground—not much crowd, those days. There were Ashramites, about 500 or so. Totally the number of visitors on that day must have come to about a thousand.

And later on I found that, out of the 24 persons who had had Darshan on the important day of 24th November 1926, (the day when the Overmental consciousness descended into the physical—celebrated as Victory day in the Ashram) I saw at

least seven persons: Nolini, Amrita, Pavitra, K. Rajangam, Champaklal, Pujalal, and Purani—many of those people. There must be some significance of 24th November and 24 people; two and four add up to six. Sri Aurobindo's symbol has two triangles and together they have six sides—so there must be some significance in that. But I in fact was very fortunate to have Darshan on that day which was the Siddhi day (Victory day). It was also the last Darshan given by Sri Aurobindo before his retirement.

Those days I was helping in small things for Ashram. There were no communications between Pondicherry and Madras. There were just a train and two buses; the travel cost was just three rupees. Coming and going was difficult. There was no telephone in the Ashram; only telegram. I had to bring stamps, coins... everything from Madras. Repairing the Mother's pen, wrist watches—everything—I had to do there. Two or three of us were doing it—I, Anantaraman and others. Later on Varadarajan also joined us.

Some years ago, Aster's mother entrusted me some work—to bring silver vessels from Madras for Nehru's birthday celebration on 14th. (Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India—his birthday is celebrated as Children's day) On the thirteenth of November I brought those things and gave to her. In the evening I saw a lot of people going to the Playground, to the Mother. I asked M.P. Pandit what it was. "It is only 'birthday people' who are going." He casually asked me, "When is your birthday?" I said, "Today, 13th." He said, "Are you kidding? Are you sure?" I replied, "Yes, yes very much so." Then they took me. The Mother knows my name already because I was doing Her work. She smiled and put a lot of toffee in my shirts and gave me a bunch of flowers. Then I told somebody, "My birthday was discovered only in the playground; nowhere else." Birthdays, particularly, we people don't celebrate. We do it only in the first two or three years and after that it is forgotten. But here in the Ashram, it's celebrated in grand scale. It is amazing that I was there on that particular day which was my birthday and received blessings of the Mother! From that day, I have been coming regularly to Ashram for my birthdays. That day was in a way another new birth for me. Even if I am sick and

cannot come I would get the card from here.

For Auroville Foundation day lot of invitation cards were printed and I had a hundred cards which I distributed some years afterwards, I also put some soil in the Matrimandir foundation.... Nobody will believe. I say this without egoism: It is Her Grace.

In 2001, November 24, we were taken to a room in the Ashram in which Sri Aurobindo had the *overmind realization*. (If you go to Bansidar's room, just turn left—where stamp collections are kept—that's the room.) In fact last year, the 75th anniversary of the descent of the *overmental consciousness* was commemorated and a memento was given to all the people. It is said that, after Sri Aurobindo's birthday, this was a very important day in the history of the Ashram. Krishna's descent had come on that day. That was the day when Dutta, a disciple was instructed by the Mother to call every one, "all" of Sri Aurobindo's disciples for an immediate gathering for blessings. From that day onwards, from that moment onwards, there is a continuous progress in the Ashram's welfare, growth and everything.

In 1972 (Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary Year) the Shankaracharya of Sharadha peetham went to Calcutta and gave a talk. Sri Aurobindo has criticized Shankaracharya many times and so people were wondering how the Shankaracharya could come forward to talk about Sri Aurobindo! Many people attended the talk. He had come to Calcutta, for a simple reason those days: Sarojini (Sri Aurobindo's sister) had appealed for funds to fight the case (made by the colonial British Government) against Sri Aurobindo. (Known famously as The Alipore Bomb Case) He had brought some money and given to her. Afterwards he stayed on along with the other boys to see Calcutta, the Port and all. Mysteriously a letter came the next day morning. He opened it but could not make head or tail of it—it was all legal points. They went to C.R. Das who was the Lawyer for Sri Aurobindo and gave him the paper. He saw that and said, "I cannot dream that such things can happen. It would have taken 15 days for me to get the whole thing done; thank you very much." The case was won and Sri Aurobindo was acquitted.

The boys were very happy and they went to Judge's house -

those days it was easy. The English Judge, Mr. Beechcroft smiled and said: "What boys, what do you want?" They replied, "We are very happy that you have acquitted Sri Aurobindo; we are here in admiration of yourself." He responded, "Yes, yes, very good." "One small doubt", queried the boys, "Is it by any chance that it was you who typed two pages of legal points and sent to us?" The judge smiled. This has been published in 'Mother India' also.

The Shankaracharya said, "In my *purvashram* I was a student of Tilak, (a revolutionary leader who struggled alongside Sri Aurobindo in the early days of India's Independence Movement) Tilak told us very clearly: 'Sri Aurobindo and Krishna are identical.'" He kept Brahmacharya and was reading Gita and wherever Bhagavan *uvacha* appeared, (meaning 'Bhagavan said') that word 'Bhagavan' was removed and substituted with Sri Aurobindo's name.

Recently I wrote an article on this in a Tamil magazine as the Tamil people may not know these things. It has just appeared in the Deepavali issue (of the Tamil magazine) last week. (Deepavali is associated with Lord Krishna in southern parts of India.) After seeing this coincidence, I felt that there must be a plain Truth underlying all these things.

Those days, some people knew Sri Aurobindo Himself as Krishna. When Sri Aurobindo Study Circle arranged to celebrate Sri Aurobindo's birthday in 1949 (or 1950) in Madras that day happened to coincide with Janmashtami day. The birthday of Sri Krishna does not fall on the same date every year but varies according to Hindu Almanac. The man who presided over the birth anniversary function, Sri Rajah Iyer, the Advocate General of the Government of Madras remarked, "Today is Janmashtami day. Why this day was chosen!" It can be had on any day, why should it be on Janmashtami day? That was a rare coincidence. Some significance is there for everything.

* * *

And all the emotions gave themselves to God.

The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth

On 25 September, 1914 the Mother addressed the Divine and adorable Mother in her Prayers and Meditations thus:

The Lord has willed and Thou dost execute:
 A new Light shall break upon the earth,
 A new world shall be born,
 And the things that were promised shall be fulfilled.

* * *

29 February 1956

During the common meditation on Wednesday

This evening the Divine Presence, concrete and material, was there present amongst you. I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine.

As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single movement of consciousness, that 'THE TIME HAS COME', and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces.

Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow.

The Mother

* * *

On 23 April, 1956 the Mother wrote the following note:

29 February - 29 March

Lord, Thou hast willed and I execute:
 A new Light breaks upon the earth,
 A new world is born.
 The things that were promised are fulfilled.

“From Sports, Your Aptitude Has Changed to Literature”

Raju

Since my childhood, I have been inclined for higher values in life and for spiritual life. I remember one sadhu going around our villages in Andhra Pradesh, asking people money (biksha) for building Ram temple. I was seven or eight years old then. I joined him and went around a few villages assisting him.

I was aware that some great guidance was indirectly leading my path. This inner urge developed in such a way that I wanted to see Avatarapurusha in his physical body.

I went to Shirdi. I had no money to buy food. The manager of the *mandir* offered me food. I said that I would take food only after working and he gave me some work.

At that time a rich man from Coimbatore came there and offered money. First I refused, but on being persuaded, took just enough to buy the book “Bhagavat Gita”, which I wanted to read.

There I had a vision of Shirdi Baba. He told me: “This is not your place. Your guru is a *jagatguru* and I will guide you to him.”

Once I was staying in Kurnool with my friend. When we went out, I heard two people talking among themselves and they were telling that at Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo was doing *tapasya*. I at once wanted to go to Pondicherry. I did not know about the Mother then. I left for Madras with my friend and from there I left for Pondicherry. In those days one needed a passport to go to Pondicherry. I did not know that, but somehow I arrived here without passport.

Shri Kameswarji, one of the Ashram inmates introduced me to the Mother. On his advice, I wrote a letter to the Mother in Telugu. Amrita took it to Her. Next day morning, I was allowed to stand near Kameswarji for balcony Darshan. I believe that Mother told Kameswarji "He is not able to stand on his feet. What work will he do?" I was given work in the Dining Hall. This was during March, 1947. I used to work for 14 hours a day. First I intended to stay for six months or so but continued to stay on and continue even now.

I had the grace of going to Sri Aurobindo's Darshan on April 24, 1947 for the first time. Then, and also whenever I went for Darshan, I saw Sri Aurobindo, a smiling person full of Peace.

From 1947 onwards I stayed in Ashram under Her care. I will now recollect a phenomenon for you: it is the Mother's meeting with people. She readily used to give free access to children especially, and elder people and sadhaks. We used to write letters and She gave replies. The Darshan schedules were not regular but the *bhava* behind Her action i.e. caring for the people who were with Her always continued under all circumstances directly or indirectly. Likewise when I found that I could not work somewhere, She would gently put me somewhere else. Like that I worked with Khirod and Pranab.

Her early morning Darshan to us used to be between 6 to 6.30 in the morning—the balcony darshan. We used to stand on the street and She looked on all of us, pouring Her blessings. The day starts like that and then we go to our different work-places. She used to personally meet us in the Meditation Hall of the Ashram—where you can now see a big photo of Her. There used to be a platform on which Her chair and foot-rest were placed. By that chair, in a tray, different flowers were kept. Mother gave special significance to flowers. Champaklal, Dhyuman and Kamalaben were mostly there assisting Mother. We used to go in a line carrying flowers in our hands; Mother received them directly from our hands, put them by Her side, and carefully selected particular flowers from the tray and turned and gave it to us with so much love, care, and compassion. These things cannot be explained in words. Sometimes She went into trance, sometimes attended outside calls, sometimes distress calls and all that used to take from a few minutes to

half an hour, and you had to wait for your turn, till She was back. Some nights in the meditation hall, She used to sit on the chair in the same way and give blessings to all of us.

During Wednesday evenings—at playground—She used to give classes to children and we also used to attend. One devotee Padma who knows shorthand used to take notes and give to us. We used to make the draft which she corrected and sent to the Mother.

During 1971, Navajata started the ‘All India Magazine’ in English and Mother gave its Telugu publication work to me. She had said: “From sports, your aptitude has changed to literature”; it then turned to printing and publication. Now also, I look after printing and publication work of ‘Arka’, a Telugu magazine.

*This world shall be God’s visible garden-house,
The earth shall be a field and camp of God;...*

“A Very Powerful Being Came Down and Tied Auroville to the Ground”

Kailas

I was in contact with the Deputy Director General of UNESCO and Mother wanted me to work for Auroville through UNESCO in which he was very helpful; he was about to retire in 1970. He had come to Delhi and I felt that I should go and see him though I didn't know what particular work I was supposed to do. So, I wrote to the Mother—Mother, I have a feeling that I should go and see him, but I don't know what I would do—Mother wrote, “This is quite all right.”

I went to Delhi with a completely blank mind. Nanda, one of the devotees of Mother and Sri Aurobindo who was working with Doordarshan TV came to see me. He said, “Do you know that Mrs. Satpathi”—who was at that time the Minister of Information and Broadcasting—“has arranged an interview with Dr Adiseshiah on Auroville by Melvin de Mello?” I told him: “No, but I would like to write questions for him for this interview.” He laughed: “He is such an efficient well known interviewer and has interviewed so many diplomats and dignitaries.” I said: “Yes, I know all that.” He said, “Well, I would be taken as a fool.” I said: “You are not asking, I am asking; if anybody is to be taken as a fool, I would be. Will you do it for The Mother?”

You wouldn't believe but it was a very silent mind and the questions came pouring down. I wrote about ten questions, got them typed, and gave them to him next morning. Then I said: “Would you do me another favour? I would like to be present when he is interviewing.” “Well, with all your impossible demands, I will attend to that too.”

I was sitting with de Mello and there was a glass barrier

between us and Dr. Adiseshiah,—All the ten questions without any change of words were asked. And the answers that came from him, gave me a touch of the Mother’s Presence. I asked de Mello if I could have a tape of this? He laughed: “You know, we never give a tape before it is broadcast.” I told him, “I wouldn’t play the tape for anybody except the Mother. Would you give me?” So he asked: “When are you leaving?” I said, “The day after tomorrow.” “We have to edit the tape also,” he said and asked me: “Are you coming to the party that Mrs. Satpathi is giving?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “I’ll see...”

You wouldn’t believe, he brought the tape and gave it to me; when I came back, I asked the Mother’s permission to play the tape before her and she asked me to see her on Saraswathi Pooja day. I went to her with Richard with a tape recorder in the afternoon and I played the tape. Mother listened to it very intently and then at the end, she said: “Kailas, do you know what I felt?” I was holding her hands and anxiously waiting for what she had to say. She said, “A very powerful being came down and tied Auroville to the ground; it was needed and he did it. Now, Auroville will be a reality. And the world will see.” When Dr Adiseshiah had come here for some meeting on education she told André, “He is very open to my force and many good things will come out of his contact with Kailas.” And he was instrumental in helping Auroville to be known to the world outside to promote its realisation.

It is the Faith in the Divine that Cures

Jitendra J. Shroff

In 1940, I was making hard preparation for matriculation examination. Whenever I felt strain, I naturally used to sit quietly before Sri Aurobindo's photo, which gave me peace and freshness. This photo signed by Sri Aurobindo,—brought earlier by my elder brother and kept in our drawing room,—always attracted me. You know that when Sri Aurobindo signed He used to put His force into it. You may also be knowing that to have Sri Aurobindo's Darshan, a photo of the aspirant had to be sent through a sadhak and only on Sri Aurobindo's approval one could come for the Darshan. I had the privilege of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Darshan for the first time in August 1945. I was twenty-one years then. One day, before the Darshan, there was *pranams* to The Mother, who was an embodiment of beauty par excellence. Next day, that is 15th August, was the *Darshan day*. When I presented myself before Sri Aurobindo, the Mother was in trance, sitting by His side. When Sri Aurobindo smiled at me I was so nonplussed that the garland for offering fell down from my hand to the ground. From the young age I was reciting the *Gita* regularly. After having the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo with His majestic personality I deeply felt that He had gone far ahead of Lord Krishna's time by rigorous *tapasya*. Then onwards till 1950, I made regular visits to the Ashram for Darshan (in one of those years all the four Darshans were attended by me).

In 1945, when I came for my first Darshan, I had requested the Mother for an interview. I had consulted for my tooth problem a Bombay dentist highly qualified in U.S.A. and he advised removal of all the teeth. Then I was only 21 years of

age. The Mother asked me about my problem and after listening, concentrated on my stomach and advised not to remove the teeth as there was nothing wrong with the teeth but with the digestive system which required improvement. As a result the teeth had a further life of thirty years.

On 5th December 1950 morning, when I went as usual to see Puraniji,—who was responsible for bringing me close to Sri Aurobindo,—he directed me to Sri Aurobindo's room, where I saw Sri Aurobindo lying in Samadhi with a *spiritual light* enveloping His body. When news spread about Sri Aurobindo's passing away, devotees and local citizens started pouring into the Ashram to have His last Darshan. I was then instructed by the Mother to stand by the side of Sri Aurobindo's body on all the five days from 12 noon to 2 p.m., so that during that time, nobody touched the body. On the 9th the Mother instructed the holy body of Sri Aurobindo to be "set at rest" in the Ashram courtyard below the 'service tree.'

On Sunday, 12th December 1950, the Mother was gracious enough to call each sadhak and visitor present in Pondicherry to Her first floor room, and after a penetrating gaze into our eyes, She handed over Sri Aurobindo's *Mahasamadhi* photo and citation. When I looked at Her, She was not the same Mother whom we had seen on the 24th November and thereafter.

Later on I came to know that Sri Aurobindo had passed on the 'Mind of Light' to the Mother's body. This 'Mind of Light,' Sri Aurobindo was successful in bringing down into His body on 5th December. In 1952, under the Mother's direction, I joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press as a proof-reader. This gave me an opportunity to understand the deeper meaning of 'Essays on the Gita' and the 'Synthesis of Yoga' of Sri Aurobindo.

In 1953, Puraniji was invited to visit various towns of east and central Africa for giving talks on Sri Aurobindo's ideals. With the Mother's permission I joined as a personal secretary to Puraniji. The Mother's specific instruction to me was to give a report of the work done during the week. This went on for six months. Later on Amrita told me that whenever the letter containing my report reached the Mother, She would insist on him to read the contents and then She entered into trance. Perhaps as a result, a number of families rounded off their

businesses and came to Pondicherry and settled here.

In 1969, I had gone to Bijapur with my elder brother to attend a marriage ceremony. Next day my brother started suffering from unbearable pain due to stones in the kidney. The doctor was consulted and with his approval, a detailed report by wire was sent by me to the Mother from the local post office. When I returned to my own residence—within twenty minutes—the doctor informed that the stone has come out through urine. There is no doubt that this was due to the Mother's grace.

In 1970, I requested the Mother to give me a *mantra* for *japa* (continuous recitation of a *mantra*). She was gracious enough to hand over a *mantra* on Sri Aurobindo with my name written on it and with Her blessings and signature. I repeated this *japa* for a period of one year.

Subsequently, a friend of mine, who used to pass his night at my residence in Bombay, became seriously ill. In the early morning as per his request, he was taken to a doctor-friend of his, a devotee of Sri Aurobindo. On examining the patient he became furious at me stating that the case was of a very serious dehydration. I maintained my cool and requested him to give a tumbler of water and a spoon. I started feeding him slowly up to one litre of drinking water, simultaneously doing the *japa*. When the patient responded by opening his eyes, the doctor was very much surprised and advised me to take him to a general hospital where he was administered glucose drip. After this treatment he lived fifteen years more and worked in Archives and Research Department of Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

In 1975, on my birthday, I was taking lunch at an Ashram guesthouse with my friends. As I was about to start my lunch I noticed that my friend looking after the guesthouse got a paralytic stroke. Immediately I got up from my seat and caught hold of his head to prevent it from twisting simultaneously doing *japa* loudly and with the Mother's Grace the stroke stopped. After about six months of treatment he recovered and is still working in the Ashram. Somewhere the Mother has mentioned that, if the *guru* personally passed on the *japa mantra* to the disciple it was very effective and powerful.

In 1980, one Sunday afternoon, I suffered from acute diarrhoea and vomiting. I waited for about four hours hoping

things would subside. But ultimately the family doctor had to be summoned through my younger brother. The doctor gave an injection and some medicine with advice for complete bed rest. As per his advice, I took three days' bed rest continuously reciting the *japa* mantra given to me by the Mother. The doctor had told my brother that the case was very serious and there was no hope for survival. On the third day, late afternoon, when I was alone in my room, someone patted on my back with force. When I looked about surprised, I saw the Mother disappearing into Her photo in the room. And, you see me here with you now. Is it not due to Her divine Grace, which is always with us!

Before concluding, I express my gratitude to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother for the transformation in my nature, outlook, and day-to-day dealings with sadhaks, friends and relatives. Thank you very much.

*Her kindly care was a sweet temperate sun,
Her high passion a blue heaven's equipoise.*

“To Be Only Thy Servant Is All I Ask”

Donald Fisher

The first time I saw Mother, was the day my father left his body. In the morning, I heard him calling and when I went into his room, he told me, “Your Mother was here.” Naturally I understood that it was my physical mother. And I knew that his time would come soon. But a little later, he called me again. And this time he was smiling very happily. He shook hands with me and then he closed his eyes. Beside his bed I saw a shadow. It was in profile. Somehow I knew it was not my physical mother but still it was Mother. Later on when I came to the Ashram, I saw the photo of The Mother taken in Tlemcen in Algeria. It is a profile photo in which She has a veil over her head. I recognized Her as being the person who had come to take my father. So naturally I was very grateful. At that time, 1967, there was the plan to build Auroville. The intention was to have the inauguration on the 28th February, (1968). But there was no access road, neither was the land purchased where the Matrimandir and the inauguration site was to be. I offered some money that my father had left, thinking that the Person who helped my father to leave his body was in need of help from me. But it was not without difficulty. The money I had been left was supposed to be passed on to future generations. And the only thing for me to do was to decide not to have any children if I gave the money away.

One day Navajata Bhajji told me, “I will take you to the Mother this afternoon.” So in the morning, I went to Auroville. I had a Land rover. And I collected some wild flowers around the Banyan tree. In the afternoon when I was going up the staircase to see the Mother, I met the Mother’s granddaughter

coming down. She looked at the small flowers and said, "You can't take those weeds to Mother; you better go and get some real flowers." But I didn't take any notice of her. When Bhai ji and I went into Mother's room, She was sitting there and I simply offered Her the flowers and said, "Mother, here are the flowers from your fields." I looked at Her and She looked at me. I think we both knew what I meant. The flowers of the Auroville fields would be the Aurovilians who came to settle there. So, they would be my children as well.

When I left Auroville—it was to find a job. I left the Land-Rover behind and it worked there for many years. While I was walking across India, on my way home, I met a swami one day. He was very nice; he asked me to stay in his ashram for the night. While we were all asleep on the temple floor, now and then I kept on waking up. It seemed to me as though I was having some conversation with the swami. But I couldn't remember what we were saying. When I woke up next morning, the swami said to me, "Wouldn't you like to stay?"

"I only ever stay in one place, once."

So I went on my way. The swami walked down the road with me for a while and when we came to a bend in the road; he stopped and said, "You know, just now you are going to so many places and meeting so many people and getting help from them. One day you will have to stay in one place and so many people from so many places would come to take help from you." Now, I didn't want to be rude and I didn't say anything. But naturally I thought, what this useless person can do! How can I help anybody! I am not even useful enough to be a straw under the Lord's feet. I am supposed to know that I was mistaken because, you know; even the straw has some weight. It is said that a camel's back was broken by a last straw. So who am I to say what weight myself carries in this world, or what the consequences of my being here are!—it is not my business. At last I came to Haridwar (a holy town on the bank of the Ganges). While I was walking beside the Ganga (the Ganges) one day, a young sadhu met me. He gave me the hibiscus flower—of Auroville—and he motioned me to offer the flower to Ganga Ma (Mother Ganges). After I had taken my bath, I offered the flower and watched it float away.

When I turned around, the sadhú had gone. Something within me made me go into the forest and make a small fire in a clearing. I did not know about yagna. But I wasn't cold, yet I wanted to make this fire. You know it was the 24th April, (one of the four Darshan days in Sri Aurobindo Ashram) although I had forgotten. And at that time the Mother was giving Darshan at the balcony of the Ashram. So I saw Mother coming out of the fire and I extinguished the fire and walked off again through the forest. I came to a small road. A very friendly chap on a motorbike stopped and motioned me to get on behind. When we came to the main trunk road, he stopped and he stood in the middle of the trunk road. And he made a big lorry stop. He said something to the driver and the driver called me to sit up in the cab beside him and off we went. I didn't know where we were going. When we came to the middle of Delhi, somewhere near Connaught Circus, I think, the driver stopped and gave me a friendly smile. So I got out and I thanked him. Some English people came along and told me, "We are sending you back to London and when you get there you can pay us the ticket." So I thought this is what I have to do. As soon as I reached London, of course I went straight to the Employment office to look for a job. The lady there was very nice. I just landed from India, so, I was still a bit confused. When the lady asked me, "What sort of job you want?" I said, "I don't know."

"What have you been doing", she asked. I said, "I just came from India this morning."

"What were you doing in India," she asked.

"Oh, well, I was trying to do yoga."

"I see", she said. And so she went to her filing cabin and when she came back, she had some forms. And she said, "Look here, I have got a job for you in a ware house. They sell yoghurt." So of course, you know, I just realized straight away, it would be impossible to explain anything. So, I took the job.

As soon as I started the job, I said to myself, "Now there is one thing you have to realize. Just like in the Ashram, at any moment Mother can walk in here and She would see whether the place is clean and tidy or not, whether the work is being done properly, whether everybody is trained for the job, whether

they are observing the safety rules." So I thought this should be my attitude for as long as I am here. And thirty three years later, my attitude is the same. I haven't changed. I am still working for the Mother as best as I can.

When I met Sudha, in 1973, it was through an advertisement in a news paper. Sudha had put that: "I am Indian, teacher, aged 31, vegetarian and I am looking for someone similar." Of course I wasn't Indian but never mind, I was vegetarian and I was aged 31. So I took a chance and replied. Sudha received seventy replies to her advertisement and yet she wrote to me. Why was that? In the letter I wrote to her I had mentioned that I had just been staying in Sri Aurobindo Ashram. And although I wasn't a Hindu, I loved India. And Sudha grew up in East Africa. Once her parents took her to some one's house; that person had a photo of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Sudha looked at the photo—she was young then—and told her parents, "I want to stay with them." Of course her parents had a fright. So they never went to the house again; they thought that Sudha might run away. And they were afraid of Ashrams. When Sudha grew up she was sent to Teachers Training College in Nairobi. And later on, she came to England to get a job. Afterwards all her family came.

So when Sudha read my letter, my answer to her advertisement, she showed it to her mother and said, "This is the person I want to marry." Naturally her parents were pretty upset. First of all, I was English. Secondly, they had never set eyes on me. So Sudha's mother told her, "Alright, you write to this man and ask him to come to our house." I received Sudha's letter. Before I opened it, I could see from her handwriting what a nice person she is. So I telephoned to them and arranged to meet them. I think it was Easter holiday. The night before I left, I had a dream. A lady was speaking to me from over my shoulder. I couldn't see who she was. Yet somehow, although her accent was neither English, nor French. I understood: She was The Mother. So the Mother told me in my dream, "You see this lady." She showed me an Indian lady—typical Gujarathi lady with glasses, middle aged. I had never seen her before. The Mother told me, "You tell her something from me. She is thinking about me some of the time but I am thinking about her twenty

four hours a day. So you give her, twenty-four red roses when you meet."

I thought to myself in the morning: there is no harm in taking the roses with me when I visit these people and if it is not the same person, I just keep quiet. When I went to their house and rang the bell, Sudha's father opened the door and standing at the top of the stair case was Sudha's mother. It was the same lady that I saw in my dream. So I explained to Sudha's mother: this is what Ma has said. When we went into the sitting room, I saw a picture of Durga sitting on a Lion and above Durga in the picture, there were, all around—red roses. Then Sudha's mother explained to me: you see, I wanted to know who you are, why you are involved with my daughter. In her meditation (Sudha's) mother prayed to Durga to enlighten her as to what was happening. In her meditation she saw Sudha and me. But it was not in this birth, it was in a previous birth. I was sitting somewhere under a tree. Sudha came along in a carriage. When she got down from the carriage, she approached me and said, "I want to stay here with you." I smiled and said, "You are married in this birth. So you have to complete that. If you want to stay with me in your next birth, then, of course." Sudha and I got married and we came to get Mother's blessings. On 15th of August, 1973, we stood in the road outside the Ashram beneath the balcony when the Mother came out. I don't think myself it mattered very much whether someone has seen the Mother or not. What matters is that She has definitely seen all of us.

Then we came back to England to work. But afterwards, Sudha found her teaching job too much and I persuaded her, "Look, we will manage on what I earn." It was easy to say that but not easy to do. We had a mortgage loan on the house that had to be paid. So for fourteen years, we did not go on any holiday. In 1990, we had saved up and bought our tickets for India.

There was a bit of a mix up from the start. First of all the travel agent said, "I have booked your ticket for 11th of August." (Because we were going for Sri Aurobindo's Darshan day) Then he rang up and said, "Well, I can't get you on the 11th, you have to leave on the first." On the morning of the first, I felt very uncomfortable. I had a sense of dark foreboding. The same

feeling I had the day I left for the war in Vietnam. Sudha also said to me, "I had a very bad dream. It seemed the dark force was sitting on me." I said to her, "You know I feel we are not going to get there. So you had better not come." She told me, "Why don't you go to the doctor and tell him. You get a certificate, give it to the Insurance Company and get a refund on the tickets." But I said, "No, I think I have to go. But don't come with me." But she wanted to come. When we got to the Airport, they said, "There is something wrong with the aero plane. So you have to wait for about three hours"—while they were fixing the air conditioners, I think. When we finally took off, I said to the chap sitting next to me, "Where you going?" He said, "I am going to Kuwait." I said, "Does this plane go to Kuwait?" He said, "Of course, it does. It stops there on the way to Madras." I said, "Oh!" We were a bit worried to know, because Saddam Hussain was threatening Kuwaiti Government. And all his tanks and everything were sitting right on the border. I said, "This is a war. I don't think somehow we would be going further than there."

When we landed in Kuwait, everybody got off for a while to stretch their legs. And when we were queuing up to get back to the plane, I heard a Tank-shell in the distance. So I said to one of the stewards quietly, "Look, I think there is something going on." But he said, "Don't worry it's just a door banging." I said, "Okay. I can't do anymore." Sudha and I didn't get back on the plane. We went down the basement away from big sheets of glass—that's the last place you want to be if anything goes bang. While the plane was sitting there, the captain suddenly realized that Iraqi planes were bombing the runway. And he ordered everybody off. So we met them again. There was nothing to be done. The invasion had already started. Soon the Tanks will arrive at the airport. We were all told to go to the hotel.

When we reached the reception, the receptionist said to me, "Will you please share your room with this gentleman and his daughter. We are short of rooms." So we all went together. This gentleman—his name was Dr. Ameer—was from South India but living in London. His daughter was about fifteen. Dr. Ameer said to me, "Everybody is panicking but not you; why is that?"

I said, "I have been through war in Vietnam, I know very well; either you get out of it or you don't." When were you in Vietnam, he asked. I said, "Well I went on 13th of March, 1965." He said, "Do you know, you were right on that plane in Saigon Airport and I was waiting to get on it?" Twenty-five years later we meet again and this is the beginning of the Gulf War. I am going to say my prayers now, he said. "Do you want us to go out of the room?" I asked. "Not at all, please stay." After he finished his prayer, Dr. Ameer said to me, "I was praying about you to Allah. I asked Allah why he made you to come here. And I think it is because you have been through it all before and you have to help people who haven't. Dr. Ameer was an incredibly useful person. He arranged for all the Indian passengers, no matter if they had British, American or any other passport to get Indian passports—and Indian people were allowed to leave. He told us, "Look, don't worry. I will put you down as residents of Pondicherry. No matter, you say that you are French and you are now Indian and you both got Indian passport and off you go." I said, "That's very kind of you." But that night, you know what happened? The telephone rang and woke me up. "I am a British Airways pilot", the voice said, "and I am in hiding. I have hidden my uniform and I am wearing some of the clothes from the hotel kitchen. Can you please help me?" So, you see, I went back to Dr. Ameer and said, "I can't come with you." "Why is that", he said. I said, "Well, I just can't."

"What about Mrs. Fisher? You must let her go."

"Of course, if she wants." But Sudha refused. Dr. Ameer became very stern, he said, "Look, Mrs. Fisher, this is an Arab country, a Muslim country. You know the position of women. What will happen if they shoot your husband? What will you do then?"

Sudha told him calmly, "If they shoot my husband, I will stand in front of him." Then Dr. Ameer turned to me, "Mr. Fisher, I don't understand you. Why are you insisting to be the last person to leave?" So I just said, "If I am the last person to leave, I will remember to turn out the lights."

When we were caught by the Iraqi Police they took us to Baghdad. And then they took us to a strategic installation right up to the North East of Iraq. It was a dam. There was a vast lake

behind the dam. And we were put in a store room above the generators of the dam—hydroelectric. So, of course, you know, I was wondering what on earth we are doing here; we bought our tickets to go to the Ashram and we find our self in this place. So, I asked the Mother. Then it came to me afterwards: this dam, if it's broken by bombs, it will flood the whole country. Everybody lives along the banks of the Tigris. And if all the force of this damn were to come down, most will drown. So then I thought, perhaps this is the reason for us being here. Whether we get bombed or not, what does it matter! But if it does prevent all these people from being drowned, then I don't mind. Surprisingly enough to us, after five months, we were released. It happened like this: One morning - it was the Ninth of December, 1990, Sri Aurobindo's fortieth anniversary of his Samadhi—the Iraqis came and said, "You are free." Are they letting everybody off?" I asked.

"Yes, of course, all of you are free."

When we came outside, nothing had changed. The mountains were there, the lake was there, the dam was there; everything was unchanged. But something was different. It was hard to say what it was. I looked at the sky, of course the Sun was shining but it didn't seem to be moving. It didn't seem as if anything was changing. I thought, "I am very lucky." Not just, I am no longer a prisoner of Iraqis. I am no longer a prisoner of Time. We were put on a plane at Baghdad Airport and we reached London Airport by about three o' clock in the morning. By the time, we got to our house, which is on the edge of London, it was, may be six and not worth going to bed. At eight o' clock, I rang up my boss. I said, "I am back. And I want to come to work." He said, "Oh, no, no. You can take as long as you like in leave—to recover. You can take three months, six months, it doesn't matter. Please don't be in a hurry." But I said, "I just want to work." There is a Sri Aurobindo Centre near us, in our same village. You see, how lucky we are. There was a gentleman who ran the centre—his name is Mr. Vijayan Manik—and we went to see him. I can't really explain; we thought we had never been away. But everybody was very upset. They said, "You don't know how much we worried about you and what had happened to you. And we didn't even know if we would ever see you

again" Then I understood. They had suffered much more than we had and I felt rather guilty to be the cause of their suffering. So I said, look, it seems that Mother wanted us to be there. That's all I can say. And it is better not to ask the Divine, why She is doing what She is doing.

One thing I would like to do now is to just to read a prayer of the Mother's. The Mother's Prayer. July the 27th 1914.

"Humbly, quietly, my prayer rises to Thee, O sweet Master, Thou who acceptest without argument and without censure all that is offered to Thee, Thou who givest Thyself and makest Thyself known to all, without asking whether they are worthy of it or not, Thou who findest nothing too weak, too small, too modest, too inadequate to manifest Thee....

Let me lay myself at Thy feet, let me melt into Thy heart and disappear in Thee, let me be annihilated in Thy beatitude, or rather let me be only Thy servant, claiming nothing more. I desire, I aspire for nothing else. To be only Thy servant is all I ask."

*In her miraculous rapture we shall dwell,
Her clasp shall turn to ecstasy our pain.*

Sri Aurobindo
is constantly
among us and
reveals himself
to those who are
ready to see and
hear him

Blessing

“..... before Thee we bow down and implore that we may never forget, even for a moment, all we owe to Thee.”

The Mother 09-12-1950

Remembering Sri Aurobindo

A Programme: at SAVITRI BHAVAN

Date: 05th December, 2004

Day: Sunday

Time: 3:30 PM.

*“Division ceased to be, for God was there.
The soul lit the conscious body with its ray,
Matter and Spirit mingled and were one.”*

Book II, 8

“O Divine Victor, all earth sings Thy praise and all forces will obey Thee.

For the Lord has said, “The hour has come”.

And all obstacles will be surmounted, — The Mother

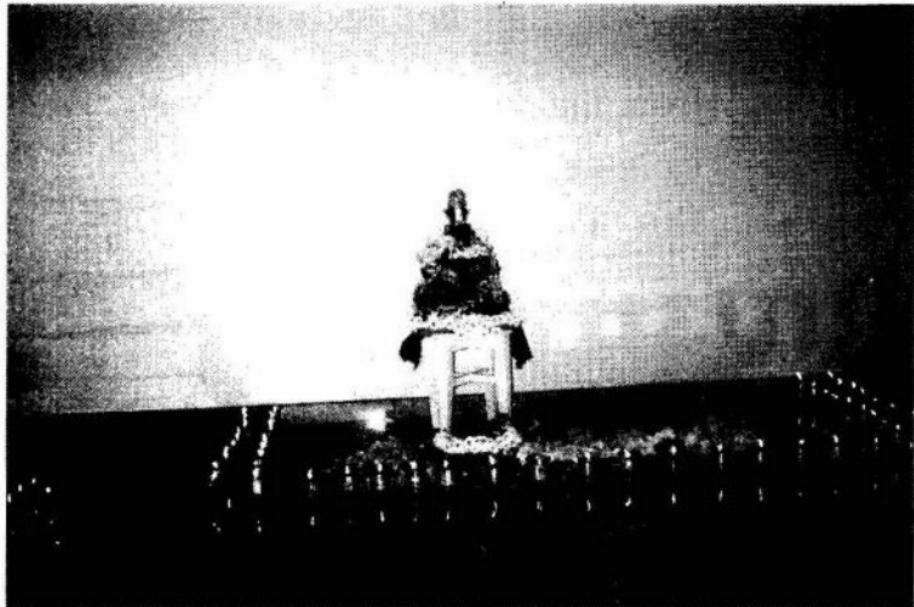
“All we owe to Thee” was the offering of gratitude with the garland of remembering from people connected to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The program began with a Guru Vandana by Joy, couplets dedicated to the Guru in Sanskrit. With a brief introduction to the series of programs we have shared since 2001, we concentrated with the Mother’s organ music and her reminiscences of Sri Aurobindo. 55 candles were lit in glass and 55 lotus flowers offered at His feet on the 5th December 2004 at Savitri Bhavan in the presence of a hundred people and His sacred presence; we began with an invocation of Sri Aurobindo Gayatri mantra by Mirresh, Gauridi, Udar Pinto’s daughter from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram shared sweet, delightful childhood memories of seeing Sri Aurobindo along with the Mother and growing up

in their protection and warmth. Six teenage girls trained in dance at Arulvazhi then presented an offering of the Shloka from Gita with a translation in English from Sri Aurobindo.

Richard shared some gleanings from Amal Kiran from the Ashram, and recited from Savitri the following lines:

*Then in the process of evolving Time
All shall be drawn into a single plan,
A divine harmony shall be earth's law,
Beauty and joy remould her way to live:
Even the body shall remember God,
Nature shall draw back from mortality
And Spirit's fires shall guide the earth's blind force;
Knowledge shall bring into the aspirant Thought
A high proximity to Truth and God.*

Book XI



One who has shaped this world is ever its lord:...

Book I, 4

अस्तो मा सद्गमय ।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर्माऽमृतं गमय ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद् १-३-२९

तथा

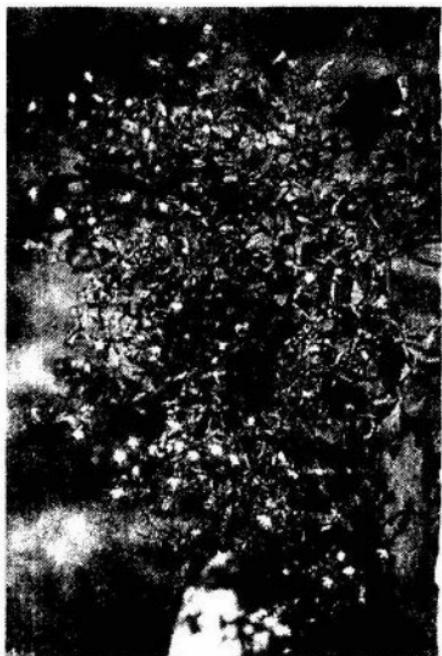
From the non-being to true being,
from the darkness to the Light,
from death to Immortality.

Om Peace! Peace! Peace!

(Upanishad)

So be it.

Govindbaba



Remembrance of Sri Aurobindo

Let us strive to realize the ideal of life he has set before us.
Lobelia erinus 'Cambridge Blue'. Blue

Glad remembrance

In activity and in silence, in taking and in giving, always
the glad remembrance of Thee.

Clarkia unguiculata 'Rosea plena'. Several colours

Prayers and Meditations

July 6, 1914

What plenitude in the perception! The entire individual being, modest, humble, surrendered, adoring, calm and smiling, feeling one with all beings, unable to make any difference of value, in perfect solidarity with all things, is kneeling down before Thee together with them all; and at the same time the formidable omnipotence of *Thy Force which is here*, ready for the manifestation, waiting, building the propitious hour, the favourable opportunity: the incomparable splendour of Thy victorious sovereignty.

The Force is here. Rejoice, O you who are waiting and hoping: the new manifestation is sure, the new manifestation is at hand.

The Force is here.

All nature exults and sings in gladness, all nature is at a festival: *The Force is here.*

Arise and live; arise and be illuminated; arise and battle for the transfiguration of all:

The Force is here.

THE MOTHER

Invitation

With wind and the weather beating round me
Up to the hill and the moorland I go.
Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?
Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow?

Not in the petty circle of cities
Cramped by your doors and your walls I dwell;
Over me God is blue in the welkin,
Against me the wind and the storm rebel.

I sport with solitude here in my regions,
Of misadventure have made me a friend.
Who would live largely? Who would live freely?
Here to the wind-swept uplands ascend.

I am the lord of tempest and mountain,
I am the Spirit of freedom and pride.
Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger
Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.

SRI AUROBINDO

PART III

1

Meeting with the Mother: A Remembrance from Childhood

Dr. Beena R. Nayak

*All can be done if the god-touch is there.
A hope stole in that hardly dared to be
Amid the Night's forlorn indifference.
As if solicited in an alien world
With timid and hazardous instinctive grace,
Orphaned and driven out to seek a home,
An errant marvel with no place to live,
Into a far-off nook of heaven there came
A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal.
The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.
A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along a fading moment's brink,
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.
One lucent corner windowing hidden things
Forced the world's blind immensity to sight.
The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god.
Then through the pallid rift that seemed at first
Hardly enough for a trickle from the suns,
Outpoured the revelation and the flame.*

The above lines from Canto One Book One “The Symbol

Dawn" of 'Savitri', the epic poem by Sri Aurobindo is the sum total of the experience signifying the dawn of my life.

I met Her at the age of ten. At ten in 1971, my grandfather Shri Kalidasa Desai, invited me to accompany him on a journey. A journey to Pondicherry for a Darshana. At ten, I was studying in the St. Francis of Assissi Convent School in Navsari. My bench mate and friend was a mischievous boy called Hateem. I used to boast to him what a pet I was for my grandfather, Bapa, who came from Africa. Bapa was the centre of my universe at that time. He had become devoted to Sri Ambelal Mehta who had joined the Ashram in the early days. Ambelal whom he called Bhai used to send him blessings and messages right from those days of 1940's. My grandfather who had lost his wife in a second childbirth was totally anchored in the Mother since his darshana visits to the Ashram. I agreed to join him on the trip because we were going to fly from Mumbai to Chennai. I remember all the feelings so vividly. We reached Pondicherry, met Bhai who lived with two young Ashramites Hrishi and Deepak. He rushed us to the Samadhi. I remember how tired and sleepy I was on the last leg but as soon as we reached the Samadhi in the atmosphere of incense and flowers all on a sudden I was awakened refreshed.

*"One lucent corner windowing hidden things
Forced the world's blind immensity to sight."*

I looked up at a window and saw a lady smiling down at me; and all was wondrous. From that moment on memory records show only a gradual widening of that Smile and a growing awareness of a wonder that made everything joyous, marvellous....

On April 24, 1972 we saw the Mother—a crowd silently praying as one, at the Balcony Darshana. Then it drizzled a little but it was felt as a shower of magic. Everyday we asked Her to grant us an audience with Her by putting our little prayers in the message box. But there was no call. But on the Darshana day I wrote to her with my ugly, clumsy handwriting. On 25th as we waited near the Samadhi the call came. I, my papa and my grandpa had been granted to see Her...

*"The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god."*

I felt shy and hesitant as we climbed the stairs. Space, time as a continuum of consciousness became concentrated on one point—how I must bow to Her. I watched all the people bow to Her and being blessed. I saw my father bow to Her and then the awesome moment came when my turn came. I suddenly was so overwhelmed by the radiant Smile that I bent to touch Her feet and found myself completely embraced with my face on Her lap. How to measure that time encapsulating all the yearning and prayer answered in one signal moment when I felt Her touch and I realized in my overflowing heart that I had met my Mother. Finally, all that followed, being blessed, given gifts by Champaklalji, coming down to the Samadhi, going to Auroville directly afterwards, was flowing in that utter feeling of Mother's love.

Beauty is his footprint showing us where he has passed,...

The Chosen One

Prem Malik

Just before the Mother's birthday, around the 15th of February, we got news from Delhi that Toshi's brother-in-law, who was quite young, had passed away because of heart attack. This was too much of a shock for Toshi and me and we therefore decided to immediately leave for Delhi. We informed the Mother and left the same evening, arriving there the next day. I had, before leaving Auroville or Pondicherry, said to Roger that I would not be able to come back, I felt, for at least a fortnight because all the ceremonies that are connected with the passing away of somebody so close would keep me in Delhi for at least two weeks. Roger was not happy because he told me that the Mother had asked them to plan something very significant for the commencement of the concreting of the foundation of the first pillar of Matrimandir on the 21st of February. I expressed my difficult situation and told him that it was not possible for me to be there on this significant day. However Mother had different plans it seems because, as Roger told me later, She told him that ten people—five from the Ashram and five from Auroville—will represent Her at the time of the commencement of the concreting by dropping the first stones into the mixer. And while naming these ten persons, She named me. Roger at that time had a strong urge to tell the Mother—as he knew that I had gone away to Delhi, and I would not be back on the 21st of February—but felt somehow or the other that it was not appropriate for him to mention it to the Mother because if She was naming me She might have a different plan. And so it was, as we found out later. When I arrived in Delhi, it was indeed a very tragic scene because Toshi's brother-in-law who passed

away was quite young and his wife was in absolute misery. However, as time passed I found, after two days, that I was not very useful at that time in Delhi because all the work that had to be done—concerning the papers in connection with the various investments etc. that the deceased had left behind—could not be done in the circumstances which were prevailing at that time. And I told Toshi at that stage that it would be of little use for her sister Dhiraj if I stayed on in that situation but would be more useful if I came back later when the 11th day ceremonies were over and things were more peaceful. I can then try to go through all the papers with her and help wherever it was necessary. Toshi was not at all clear as to what should be done because it was a very difficult decision to make. So she asked me to speak to her elder sister. When I spoke to her, she said that she saw the point that I was making and that it would be more useful for me to be there later to help Dhiraj with all the work that need to be done. But she was not sure whether she could allow me to leave. So strangely enough she asked me to talk to Dhiraj. And when I spoke to her she felt that I was approaching the issue in the right manner and that I would serve no useful purpose by staying on at that time. And she asked me to come back after 15 days when things would be in a better shape for me to be able to help her. This was something which I frankly did not expect. But she took a very pragmatic view and I was then able to leave for Pondicherry on the 20th morning. It was totally unexpected.

While leaving Pondicherry for Delhi I had given my house to a dear friend Gen. Tewari who with his family was visiting Pondicherry at that time and they were staying in the house. When I reached Pondicherry it was late night and when I went to the house I found that they were all fast asleep because they were to leave for Auroville Matrimandir site early in the morning by bus. However I got a room to share with another Aurovillian, Yusuf, who was staying in the guesthouse below my house. And early next morning I got the battery of my car ready to go to Auroville. When I arrived there I found that there were more than two to three thousand people lining up to drop a stone or a pebble in the mixer as was decided by the Mother. But I did not know that I was supposed to be in the group of ten who

had to represent the Mother by dropping the first few pebbles. As per the normal practice I joined the queue but something in me kept urging me to do something. So I told the young man from the Ashram, who was on duty supervising so that nobody broke the queue that I had to go and see Roger which was very important. He was hesitant but I promised him that I would come back to my place in the queue and cause no problems. He knew me, this young boy, and therefore he allowed me—after having got the promise from me—to go to see Roger. When I moved towards the Matrimandir site where the mixer was all set and ready, I met Ramanathan, who jumped on seeing me because he knew that I was not expected for two weeks. He told me that it was an absolute miracle that I was there. I said, "Why? What's so big, so great about it, except that I myself am very happy to be there on this very significant occasion?" But he said, "You better go and see Roger; he will tell you." So I went looking for Roger and I met him. He also jumped for joy. I couldn't understand what was happening. Then Roger went and spoke to the leader of the group which was looking after the queue and told him something and he allowed me to go and join the small group of people at the head of the queue. I did that without having any idea as to what was happening and Roger had no time to speak to me at that stage. So, as we were told, ten of us, five from the Ashram and five from Auroville, were handed a stone each to drop it into the mixer on behalf of the Mother. This really struck me as something very strange; very welcome but nothing short of a miracle. The miracle became clearer to me when later in the morning Roger told me the whole story of how the Mother had included me in the group of ten who were to represent Her for dropping those stones in the mixer. Believe me; I could have collapsed at that time because it was such a remarkable miracle. And I could not comprehend the total significance of the whole thing which dawned on me slowly as the day progressed.

The next day there was another very interesting incident. When I was told by the person in charge of the Ashram transport Abhay Singh that I had sent him a very strange telegram. And that was indeed very strange because the telegram said, "Mother arriving 20th evening flight. Send the car." I was absolutely

flabbergasted. I do remember clearly my reaction because I broke down at that time. How could this happen? I was very clear that I had put the telegram in a different way. I had said, "Arriving in Pondicherry that evening." But somehow or other the telegram as submitted and as communicated included the word 'Mother'. This touched me very deeply and I really fell on my knees in gratitude to the Mother.

A vast surrender was his only strength.

It Is Still the Same

Nergez

In January 1972, I with some of my friends from our Hatha Yoga class was going by taxi from Bombay [Mumbai] to Pune. I heard them discussing about their trip to Pondicherry in February. Since I had heard from friends and family about the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, I was curious. I asked them if I could also join them. So, on 19th February, 18 of us from Bombay came to Pondicherry. On 21st February, being Mother's Birthday, She gave 'balcony darshan'. That was my first glimpse of Her and I must confess: I was not much impressed.

As one of our group members knew most of the Ashram Trustees, we managed to get Her darshan though Mother had stopped giving darshans. So, on 24th or 25th or 26th (I don't remember exactly) the 18 of us went up to Her room, in a queue. There I saw an old lady sitting on a chair, bent, and drooling a little. I felt a slight revulsion. But then She picked up her handkerchief and wiped Her mouth, which assured me She was not senile. When my turn came and I stood in front of Her, I was transfixed by the expression. It was compassion personified; no other details. We had been advised by our friends that after kneeling and placing our head beside Her we should look into Her eyes as long as possible. This I did; the expression changed: She opened Her eyes, and the face looked like Mahakali's. It was frightening and I had the urge to run away from the room. But then I remembered the advice and kept gazing into Her eyes. They turned into a vast ocean. Then a small thing like a periscope appeared at the edge, moving towards the centre. In the middle, it sank and became one with the ocean like a drop of water merging. At that time I felt 'I was

no more, nothing left of 'I', 'Me' or 'Mine', just a minute part of that vast ocean. After sometime,—I do not know how long,—the face again became gentle and compassionate. The darshan was over. When I was leaving the room, I became conscious of a small voice repeating like a record "I need you, I need you" in English which is not my mother tongue.

When I went down to my friends, I found them with tears in their eyes. When I asked them they pointed to my face which was also wet.

I was completely captivated. It was like 'I came, I saw and I was conquered'. After 30 years it is still the same. I am in Auroville not in Pondy—not that it matters. I am still Her willing slave.

*Nothing we think or do is void or vain;
Each is an energy loosed and holds its course.*

“Will You Help?”

Subash

Vanakkam!

Unlike the earlier speakers in the series of talks on the Remembrance of Mother, I did not have any personal contact with Mother. I have not seen Mother in the context of Auroville or Ashram work, though I have had Mother's darshan in Her room on my birthday and with a group of Youth Camp participants, and Her balcony darshan seven times. So what I am going to talk is: how I came to Mother, and how She has been guiding me for the last 25 years.

I come from Madurai in Tamil Nadu and am an engineering graduate. When I was doing second year in the engineering college I became acquainted with Sri Aurobindo's writings. I liked his book, 'The Human Cycle', very much. That was in the 1960's and that was the decade when the Hippy movement was flourishing. Like them we were averse to social conventions and in practice did not care a bit about those conventions. I was already an atheist, a non-believer in God and rituals. So naturally and soon I was attracted to Communism, particularly to the leftist ideology. They were called Marxists then and they had a student's wing called Students Federation of India. Many of the students in our college became members of that Federation and worked for it. All the three students' associations in my college had got students from this Federation elected as Presidents of those associations. In the course of time as its member I read a lot of communist literature. I felt that some real intellectual in the Marxist movement should write about Communism in such a way that he should nullify all of Sri

Aurobindo's arguments supporting spirituality and other similar things, which were very powerful and very hard to refute. Some Marxist politician with the name Arabinda Basu had written a 20-page thesis refuting Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. But it was neither interesting nor written intelligently. I strongly wished that someone with a greater intelligence than Sri Aurobindo should write refuting his arguments! And I was seriously thinking of becoming a member of the Communist Party after my studies were completed—I was preparing myself for that.

Then somewhere in 1970 a change occurred. I was in Bombay where my sister was living. Her husband had some connection with Ashram; he was supplying some bottles and bottle caps to the Ashram's Perfumery. He had got the Ashram calendar for that year from that department. I was in my sister's place on 1st January, 1970—it was my birthday. As I wanted to be in my sister's house on my birthday, I reached there on 31st December night. There, when I got up in the morning,—it was 10 a.m.—I saw that calendar with a picture. I did not know it was that of Mother as I did not know of Her then. The picture of Mother was there with a message for that year, "The world is preparing for a big change. Will you help?"

I liked those words. I mentally talked to that picture, "Oh, you appear to be a spiritual person! So, you must be wishing this change to happen in a spiritual way. But I want to be a communist. I like your message and I want to help. But I am ready to do it in my own way." In such an amusing manner I was mentally talking to that picture! The interesting thing was that only in that year the change occurred in me. Sometime in March of that year, after I came back to Madurai, one of my friends got a prize in a speech competition. He was given a small book as prize. It was 'The Mother' by Sri Aurobindo. He gave the book to me to read. I read it. When I read about the four aspects, I was very captivated, particularly by the portion on Mahalakshmi. I was reading that portion repeatedly. I could not help feeling after reading that portion that it could not be a trash or lie or humbug. It could not even be an imagination. One cannot mentally think and write like that unless one has experienced it. What was expressed in it must be true, a real thing. My deeper being was touched by the description of

Mahalakshmi and somewhere deeply convinced of the truth of that writing. Even though I felt it was true, there was a wish in me to test the truth of the realisation of the person who wrote it, that is, Sri Aurobindo. This was due to atheism and rationalism of the communist part in me. I felt somehow this fellow should be tested. I referred to Sri Aurobindo at that time "this fellow". Only later he became for me Sri Aurobindo and Bhagawan. I reasoned thus: If he has realised spiritually and realised God through some methods, and if I also practice those methods I also should get the same realisation. Then his truth will be proved.

So I decided to try one of his methods. I came across it in Dilip Kumar Roy's book 'Sri Aurobindo Came To Me'. In that book Dilip Kumar Roy had mentioned about Sri Aurobindo's letter describing his experience of silencing his mind. I decided to try it. I was also a little afraid to practise that thing: what if something or other happened to me. But I gathered courage and decided to practise it. I fixed a certain date to practice it. I sat down for it. Sri Aurobindo had said in that letter: You can see thoughts coming from outside and entering you; before they enter you reject them. I tried it for sometime. I could not see thoughts coming from outside. I did not know how to do the thing. But during this time I found that a concentration on something helped prevent the thoughts from coming. I could not see the difference between rejecting the incoming thoughts and diverting the mind away from any thoughts. So without my knowing I started concentrating on the bearded figure of Sri Aurobindo because it helped in a simple way to prevent the thoughts from coming. Even though I wanted to do this as a test to prove the truth of the practice, I was, secretly and in the depth, convinced of the truth of the practice and wished to have the same realisation as Sri Aurobindo's. Actually there was a desire to have this realisation. This time the concentration was intense and I felt somehow I will get that realisation. The concentration on the figure lasted for one and a half or two hours. But I did not get that realisation. Instead something else happened.

At the end of two hours I felt an intense love, great warmth, for everything and it was growing more and more and enveloping

each and everything. I saw the wall and felt a love towards it. I loved the floor, I loved the books, and I loved whoever was there. I could not give any rational explanation for this experience; but this love, this warmth was coming from within me. I was trying it everyday for 3, 4 days. Everyday this experience came and every time its effect lasted for several hours. In those 3, 4 days whatever hard feelings or negative thoughts that were in me towards people or things or events totally disappeared. All the strong opinions against rich people that communism nurtured dissolved. I could not explain this in any way except that I saw it arising from within me. Each time I had it I wanted to have more and more of it, to go deeper and deeper in me and merge with the source of it. The impact of this feeling lasted for more than 4 or 5 years. Only in that year I came to the Ashram.

Still I did not know that the Mother existed. I wanted to know more about Sri Aurobindo. I went to the Madurai University Library. A new section with books on mysticism had been added. An entire shelf consisted of books on or by Sri Aurobindo. On top of those books was Nirodbaran's 'Talks with Sri Aurobindo'. Nirodbaran, K.D.Sethna, Dilip Kumar Roy were all people like me, rational people who will be convinced of any thing only when they could personally experience it. Hence that book and similar other books struck a chord in me and I was able to empathise with their writings, with their thoughts. Gradually I learnt more and more about Sri Aurobindo and of course about Mother.

In August 1970 I came to the Ashram and had Mother's 'balcony darshan'. An intense aspiration was felt on seeing Mother. That intensity lasted in the same measure throughout my three days' stay in Pondy. In fact that intensity was the hallmark or landmark of my meditation. That is, when I meditate and get that aspiration, I would feel, "Oh, alright, I have succeeded in today's meditation." I wanted to have that aspiration again and again. I wanted to have it always. That aspiration was the sustaining force in my effort to move towards Mother; it was the guiding indicator for proceeding with things—intense aspiration, aspiration with a sense of guidance.

August 1972 came. In those two years gradually many things

developed. I decided not to join the communist party and wanted to be part of Sri Aurobindo's work. The very day I decided I saw an advertisement in *The Hindu* in 'Letter to the Editor' column explaining how to join Auroville. It was inserted by Navajata on behalf of Sri Aurobindo Society. I wrote a request to him and he sent an application form. I filled it up along with my photos as required. My application was answered in January 1973 when Shyam Sundar forwarded it to Mother. He sent a postcard with the note "You will be happy to know that Mother had approved your joining. Be ready to work hard." Of course, I was happy. On March 1973, I came to Pondy and the rest is....

A lot of guidance was there and a lot of things happened in between. It would take a long time to narrate them. It will not be possible to do it in this session: there is no time for it now. So I would conclude by saying: I felt throughout guided by Her and that guidance was always got in the context of actual and active life. One method which I was practising regularly helped me in getting that guidance. It was the method of consecration. That was the method which Sri Aurobindo discovered as effective after 10 years of studying and testing his yogic practice. That is the method which He considered best for practising Integral Yoga in the context of life; it is the method of consecration. I am trying to apply that method for my daily activities for the last 15, 20 years and still I am proceeding with it.

Thank you.

Everything Happened around the Mother's Movements and Her Timetable

Tapas Bhatt

The life at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram was a unique experience. To be a student in the Ashram School from my early age of four is a special privilege to be educated under the direct guidance of the Mother.

How did I happen to be there in the year 1956 with my parents, older sister Chetana, my younger brother Manan and my grandfather Dr. Becharlal Bhatt ?

Short background of my family

Dadaji, as I used to call my grandfather was already connected to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Yoga from many many years. He had first met Sri Aurobindo in Baroda and later joined the Ashram in Pondicherry around 1928. He served as a doctor in the Dispensary and as one of the attendants to Sri Aurobindo in his room, when He could not walk anymore because of his injured foot. My father known as Vibhu visited and stayed at the Ashram several years from his young age of 15 onwards.

My first childhood memories begin from 1956 when I joined the Ashram school. The first language we learnt was French and the Mother's prayers. The images that remain fresh in my heart and mind are those of the early mornings of Mother's Darshan at the Balcony, the School, daily evening meetings with the Mother at the playground where She would offer us little gifts which I used to receive with lots of joy and excitement.

Later on, the regular Darshan Days, and our special individual Birthday meetings with the Mother in her living room.

Everything happened around the Mother's movements and her timetable. Our life was organized by Her for our school classes and sports. The Physical spaces known to us were: the main Ashram building, with its two balconies where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother lived; the Tennis-ground, the Playground, the Ocean, the Beach and the canal road of Pondicherry that divided the town into two distinct areas of life and atmosphere. This was my whole universe.

The early morning waking up, rushing out of the house with a neem-stick in the mouth towards the Ashram Balcony to see the Mother. Then, my sister and I would run to the Beach for a swim, secretly sneaking out from the crowd. Every evening we met the Mother again at the Playground. We would be waiting in line impatiently to receive Her blessings and some sweets from Her. My father had to run behind us to catch us. In the evening at the playground, after the sports, I remember the long line where I stood impatiently waiting for my turn to receive Mother's Blessings and the gift. Our sports captain's job was to supervise us and maintain the silence while waiting. Sometimes, even during the sports, the Mother would be around, watching us and talking to the captains.

1962-1975 – Life at the school

My parents had taken us back to Gujarat for some reason where we stayed about four to five years and then in 1962 we were brought back to the Pondicherry Ashram School. The Mother had accepted us again. I was then 10 years old. The two shifts of places and schools, the change of life style, atmosphere and the education system left an impact on us. Even the languages: being taught first in French, then the shift to learning everything in Gujarati in Gujarat, and then again back to French, English, Gujarati and Sanskrit at the Ashram School. It was indeed a great joy to be back in the Mother's school. The evolution that took its own turn and gave shape to our life's vision came indeed directly from the Mother's guidance, love, Grace and Her day to day involvement in our growth, our aspi-

ration, our dreams, our joy to learn everything that we wished to do in the school, the additional curriculum activities such as regular daily sports, weekly activities of ballet, theatre, piano, painting, tennis, Indian dance and music, languages, films, cycling, the special Christmas days, the Darshan Days, the Birthday special private meetings with the Mother, holidays, the dance and theatre performances. For everything and every decision/step, we consulted Her and sought her permission.

Our life was kept busy all the time, throughout the day, right from early morning at 6 AM. All the activities in which I took part, I did with full discipline, joy and interest. I did have my moods of revolt and irritation, especially when I wished to see a country side sun-set landscape outside Pondicherry town, I could never go as I had to attend, in a compulsory manner the physical education activities on a daily basis from 4.30 to 7 PM. The best part was: we had no exams or heavy home-works to do at home. The experiment the Mother tried out at the Free Progress Section of the school was to allow a child to grow in freedom with a sense of responsibility of oneself while being in a well organized framework of school discipline. It is an experience which has left such a deep impact on me, that it feels like I have never left that school, and I am always thirsty for knowledge that can help me to grow constantly, both inwardly and outwardly. It seemed like a life of Paradise on Earth, in Spirit and in Matter.

The Auroville connection right from its inception

Around the period of 1965-1968, Roger Anger used to visit our Free Progress classes after visiting the Mother. Tanmayda, (Late Ashram Member and Teacher/Director of the Free Progress System), would ask him to talk to us about Auroville. Roger Anger would then give us big white sheets of paper and drawing pencils, requesting us to use our imagination and mind to draw the Ideal city of Auroville as we would dream, design specially the center of Auroville. From this point onwards, we were later taken to the Auroville site, a space of barren red earth, blue sky and the ocean, traveling in a small

bus on sandy roads, making new ones for the future city of Auroville. It was already then a feeling of great adventure, joy and fun to work together and dirty our hands in the red earth under the blue sky and sunny days.

28th February 1968, the Inauguration Day and the becoming of an Aurovilian

A week before the 28th of February'68, I had the privilege to go everyday to Auroville with Roger Anger and his team, to prepare the ground work for the opening day. There was a little water pond near the Banyan tree in which I joined the Tamil local village women to draw different colorful Kolams and return late evening at Pondicherry. I was fortunate to be selected by our Ashram School authorities to be one of the representatives of the absent countries : Syria: with another male student of the same school, we were to hold the banner of Syria's name and a bowl of earth, symbolizing the human unity, pour it in the central Urn which stands in the middle of the Amphitheatre of the Matrimandir Gardens.

The Ceremony was indeed a grand, special and unique experience. More than five thousand people—children and adults, men and women coming from all over the world, gathered around the Urn, a delegation of 121 countries were represented, each one with its banner and bowl of earth/or salt from its respective country. My parents, my two sisters and brothers too. Chetana, my older sister represented Panama. The Ashram members had done a wonderful job of organising and planning every detail under the direct instruction of the Mother. It truly felt like the Vision of the Dream of Auroville that Mother aspired to realize for the humanity and allow every human being to take part in this adventurous unknown path that She called the City of Dawn: Auroville.

Today, Auroville is 36 years old. It has evolved and grown into a beautiful paradise of greenery, birds, children and adults of different colors and cultures. After I completed my Education in 1975, my next logical step was to join Auroville. But it took me two years to make that decision while trying out first other options, such as experiencing voluntary work in the

Ashram Departments such as SABDA, later secretarial work under the Guidance of Dr.Chamanlal Gupta, and short-term training in Pottery at the Golden Bridge, with Ray and Deborah. I even tried going out for higher studies in Banaras and Baroda and in the US. But it turned out that my urge to join Auroville was stronger. The Mother gave me all the inner strength despite the resistance felt from the Ashram and my family ! So I joined on 1st November 1977. The inner call was strong enough to confront a new life, adventurous, challenging and difficult. The rupture with my family was painful but my inner link to the Mother and to my family grew stronger and evolved at another level.

After joining and plunging into the intense experiences of collective life of the first fifteen years, the Mother helped me to grow, evolve and learn new ways of dealing with life, discover freedom and my own individuality. How to become a perfect instrument for the Goal of Auroville and realize Her Dream and my Dream ? A great challenge to live the Integral Yoga indeed, and the becoming of an Aurovilian is still in its process of permanent search. A long way to go with full faith in the Mother.

So many people have received Her Call to come and try to realize Her Dream through their daily actions and activities, aspiring to become the ideal instruments for the Divine Will alone and build the City of the Future, live in Harmony, Peace, Beauty for a transformed and Divine life one day. The Mother has willed this City from the highest level of Consciousness and no doubt it will exist despite us, despite our little and big obstacles, resistances. She is always present in our midst to help us grow, learn and make the surrender of ourselves to merge in Her Consciousness and live through Her Vision alone.

Om Namo Bhagavate

6

“Her Presence Leaning Out Toward Me”

Bhavana Dee

When I came to Pondicherry in 1971 on my way out of India to Sri Lanka, I'd already visited many ashrams and I'd come up with the somewhat peculiar notion that if the renunciation of worldly life that was everywhere proclaimed as the essence of spiritual practice was true, then when people became enlightened they should disappear. But they didn't—they lived on as fat gurus! So I was pleasantly surprised and ready for the world-inclusive spirituality of Auroville.

At that time Mother was already well known to be not keeping well, and I didn't feel like adding myself to the throngs bidding for Her time and attention. Also, I was not a “feeling” person; most things which thrilled other people left me cold, and I didn't want to risk the subtler sense of connection I had with Her. I felt that *because of Her*, whatever I did in Auroville would be of service to the whole world—and that was just what I was looking for. So I set to work, living in the Auro-Dairy barn and helping with the milking, having faith that because I was part of Her Dream—this was working hard to help the world. I did go to see Her once at public darshan, windswept on the balcony, but this was not the real connection.

She sent me away from Auroville, and I didn't see Her then either, but accepted that if She didn't want me there, I didn't belong. But her son told me that these things are not to be taken as permanent—I should come back later, in a year, and apply again which I did, and although Mother had passed in the meantime, I was readmitted.

I lived with a person who had great impatience in waiting—

smoke of irritation would almost pour out of his nose and ears whenever he had to wait. I found that an unproductive way to behave, and decided that whenever I had to wait I would remember Mother. Thus meditation started. Many years later, when someone asked, as a conversation piece, if I could have tea with whoever I liked in all of history, who would I choose, I chose Mother. I wanted to tell Her about Village Action and the insights I'd had about Her and Sri Aurobindo trying to develop us,—like we were trying to help out the villagers—the parallels I'd seen in theirs and our incomprehension and incapacity.

Later, when I took my third Vipassana course I had a real meeting with Mother. I saw Her clearly, above and on my left looking down on me as if from that balcony, and nodding Her head and smiling and enthusiastically saying, "Yes, yes. Now you're working, now you're working." I knew that my practice was approved by Her. This was further corroborated when, after I'd followed at last an urge—coming in meditation—to change my name to Bhavana, Mother's Messenger Suresh, sent me an envelope with "Bhavana" written in Mother's own hand. Then I really did "feel" Her Presence leaning out toward me, over time and space, and approving of my practice, including my *sadhana* in her embrace.

Mother did a great thing in creating Auroville as a radically new *tapaloka*, a place for spiritual practice. "Build a city," She said and invited everyone who had a hope for the future to participate. Not the usual holyplace full of rituals and pretences—Her Dream will only come true if we manage to make that infinitesimal shift in consciousness which will have us thinking in wholes rather than parts. An economy without taxes or even money, a society without a constitution or even laws or rules—the only way to bring this about is to change from within. I think that what She did with as unlikely a specimen as me is testimony to Her greatness, and so with humility I write this at the request of Syamala and Varadharajan. Jai Ma.

*My God is will and triumphs in his paths,
My God is love and sweetly suffers all.*

Like the Sun Casting Its Rays upon All Things Alike

Vijay

By the time I arrived at the Ashram in 1967 the Mother had already withdrawn since several years to Her high room. As all the time thousands wished to visit Her, newcomers to the Ashram—especially if they were a nobody like me—were allowed but a very short time with Her on our birthdays. In those times I had still the mental idea that a real guru had to be *Indian*, so I was studying only Sri Aurobindo's books and thought of Her as some wise old lady, whose main point was that She had lived close to Him for so many years. So when my birthday came I went to see Her without expecting anything much, out of mere curiosity.

Of what I saw when Her door finally opened to me, I could never say but only give the vaguest of hints: a *body* was there wrapped in golden silk or seemed to be in a certain light, and yet it was so *magical*, as if...*transparent*, glowing from within, like a window to infinite, endless wide open dimensions... My first impression was of *infinite, multidimensional spaces* opening in front of me, and I felt as if I had lived my whole life in a matchbox... *Eyes* were there which looked into my utmost depths like I was utterly naked within, which saw all I ever was and every event of my life, saw even the most shameful and terrible things I ever did but *without any judgment or condemnation at all*, like the sun casting its rays upon all things on earth big or small alike, be they dirty slums, battlefields or mountain peaks.

A mouth and a warm *smile* were there, and suddenly I became aware of a rising tide, wave after wave of Her infinite Love

engulfing me, and I felt then that I would be forever safe in Her...

But at the same time I felt so ashamed of being myself, still existing and being nothing. Like never before, I became aware of all my shallowness, of being so terribly *unworthy* of Her Love, and something in me cried out then, "Mother, see all the darkness in my heart, all the violence and lust in my heart, how I am deeply crippled in my spirit and inwardly blind; You know how I did hurt even some who loved me. *Please forgive me for having defiled Your spaces with my presence, for Who You were, I knew not...*"

But She just kept smiling and smiling to me with infinite love for a time which seemed to have no end.

I put my head on Her feet, and received a red rose from Her hand, kept looking at Her in immense wonder, but then She seemed to recede from my vision until I could see Her no more—I found myself outside Her door and could not understand how it had happened. Champaklal was speaking to me, I could hear each word he was saying yet somehow all together they made no sense at all...Only next day when it was explained again I understood that when they had told me that my allotted time with Her was over and that I should leave I could not emerge from my trance, and even remained unaware that they were shaking my shoulder. Eventually they had to carry me, lifting by my legs and my back, away from Her...

Of what I saw when Her door finally opened to me, I could never say but only give the vaguest of hints...

On my next birthday I wanted to bring Her a rose, as it was the custom, and asked Richard for one. (Richard was a Bengali—She often gave westerners Indian names and to Indians Westerners name, like in my case). Richard gave me the most magnificent rose from his garden, a red rose with pinkish hues, but by the time I thought of asking him for something to cut away its thorns he had already left. I tried to break them off by hand but they were very strong and I was unable to. So, in the end I cut a long strip of green raw silk from my little temple,—which was just a small low table with their photos and an incense holder on it,—and carefully wrapped it all over the stem of the rose. Then I made two very strong knots, one on top and

one at the bottom to ensure that it would not get undone and no thorn would prick Her hand. When I presented it to Her and She saw what I had done She laughed and laughed and She laughed some more and it seemed to me that She appreciated it very much, although it was such a little thing. Then She brought the rose very, very close to Her eyes, and began to open the knots. This took Her quite a while, and it turned out to be the longest time I ever spent in front of Her. After She finished opening both knots She put the rose in a flower pot next to Her and then She rolled up that strip of green raw silk and put it in my hand...

And from her eyes the Eternal's bliss shall gaze.

The Mother—My First Visit A Remembrance from Childhood

Madhavi

*There is a plan in the Mother's deep world-whim,
A purpose in her vast and random game.
This ever she meant since the first dawn of life,
This constant will she covered with her sport,
To evoke a Person in the impersonal Void,
With the Truth-Light strike earth's massive roots of trance,
Wake a dumb self in the inconscient depths
And raise a lost Power from its python sleep
That the eyes of the Timeless might look out from Time
And the world manifest the unveiled Divine.*

Book I, 4

Pondicherry was a name that had magical impact in my young mind because of my elder brother and mother's visit to Pondicherry and their first Darshan of the Mother. The vast Bay of Bengal near the Sri Aurobindo Ashram also had a strong impact and my brother lavished in his description of it to the extreme, I guess. The train accident that they had encountered on their way back was stating a fact as if they should not have returned but rather remained forever in Pondicherry. The most amazing part was that both my mother and brother had no major injuries other than a small scar on my mother's forehead, a mark that made the rest of the family grateful ever since. Before the visit, it was my father who had first visited the Ashram on his birthday and he was deeply impressed by the Ashram atmosphere. He wanted our mother to experience that too. It was only after that they decided to communicate and join this new spiritual adventure.

In 1970 the whole family moved to Pondicherry after having sent our family photos to the Mother and in return received the blessing from Her. The scrutinizing was done on those days by the Mother herself if anyone decided to join the Ashram or Auroville. Our parents wanted to have a special family Darshan of Her after our arrival and even this was fulfilled. This was my first visit and this time I would visit Her on my sixth birthday.

I went alone! Felt timid all the way. Everything was so faultless and flawlessly silent that made me more conscious of my excitement deep inside. In certain way a strange confidence and boldness came over me and my mind started to swim with interesting questions like: What would I say If She asked me something? Would I be able to answer Her properly? In many ways I felt at home even in that stillness.

I climbed all those steps and passed through Sri Aurobindo's room where many were meditating. A room that looked too serious but the tiger skins were as if wide awake. I had seen real tigers before that in the zoo or circus but these heads of tigers looked more ferocious than all the living ones. It nearly hypnotised me but I continued my journey up to the Mother's room. This was a room that was full of daylight and few people that were by Her were friendly and all were smiling when I entered this room. I had no words to say but could make a pranam by touching my forehead on Her knees. I do not remember how long this was until I decided to look up at Her to find a warmer smile waiting to receive me. If silence speaks more than words then this was that moment, I guess. I received my birthday card from Her which was signed by Her wishing me with a big bouquet of fresh flowers. My bouquet had many pink and white lotuses which I later learnt symbolized their presence surrounded by different shades of immortality.

It was on this birthday that I made the mistake of giving my date of birth one day before the real date. Ever since I have been celebrating my birthday on the previous day of my real birth-date. In other words this can be a symbolic meaning that by arriving in Pondicherry, I got a 'new birth'!

“That Touch I Could Never Forget” A Remembrance from Childhood

Ardhendu

I am Ardhendu. I live in Aspiration and I am in Auroville since 1970, when I was just ten years old. I would like to start with a quotation from Sri Aurobindo which is about Mother: “The one whom we adore as the Mother is the divine conscious force that dominates all existence.”

This is actually my mantra or....everything. I begin the day with this prayer and end the day with it. It’s a continuous process. And in the middle of the day also, anytime when I feel that I need to take the name of the Mother, I use this—the same thing, these few lines of Sri Aurobindo about the Mother—and it gives me so much of strength, joy and happiness that I really cannot express it. It is just wonderful.

I had come to Pondicherry, from West Bengal, in the beginning of 1970 and visited the Mother with my family,—that is, with my parents, and my sister and brother. I have a sister who is working now and others are no more, excepting my aunty. Parents have passed away. It was on my mother’s birthday that we visited together. People waited in a long queue and were called in one by one. I just saw the Mother and felt, “Okay, this is the Mother. Okay.” At that time I did not have much feeling. We just did *pranam* like this, our Indian way, and came out. That was my first visit. Of course on darshan days we saw Mother from the balcony. But the occasion to see her individually again came on my birthday on 7th November 1970. I got the permission card from Nolini Kanta Gupta, the secretary, and joined the queue. I was carrying a bouquet of flowers and was sitting down with twelve or thirteen devotees who had their

birthday on the same day. I was just ten years of age and watched as everyone went, one by one, to the Mother for darshan and *pranam*. When I saw that everyone had gone and being left out I felt, "What happened? Won't the Mother call me?" Then the last call came. There was a loud cry: 'Ardhendu!' I was trembling and feeling, "Who is this?" and got up. That was also my first meeting with Champaklal. With his long beard and huge body he was standing at the entrance and said, "Come, come, come." Then I did not even know one word in English; I knew only Bengali. So when he said, "Come, come," I asked, "What?" He showed his hand towards the Mother and asked me to go. As I entered, I turned left and saw her sitting on her armchair, dressed in blue. I did not know what to do. I was alone in the room with Champaklal. I slowly took a step, turned and looked at her. It was totally different than what I saw the previous time when I visited with my parents. I was just looking at her because I did not know what to say, because I did not know English, French, Tamil or any other language but Bengali. I just told, of course in Bengali, "O You!" (*thumi* in Bengali). Her feet were not visible. So without hesitating I dropped my head on her lap. I knew that because I was the last person, nobody was going to ask me to get up and go. I decided to stay, even for the whole day. With her right hand she touched my head. Oh! That touch I could never forget. Her hand was so soft, the softest I ever felt. Even today, I freshly remember and have the same feeling her touch gave me. Wherever I am, whatever I am doing, I just have to remember it and I get the feeling. I almost slept or went into a sleep state. It lasted for seven or eight minutes. I had a small box of toffees. Then slowly another 'Ardhendu', Mother called. I was trying to touch her feet, but I could not because they were drawn inside. Then I said, "Yes." "You, open your box." It was repeated in Hindi and English. I could not understand. Then Champaklal told in Bengali. Then I realised and opened and held it for her like this (the speaker shows his hand). She just touched it. I am still holding it.

Again there was a shout from Champaklal, "Mother, take a toffee from it." Mother looked at me and at Champaklal and put her three fingers in the box. She did not pick up the one at the surface but took one from the bottom and she nodded like

this and said something in French or English which I don't remember now. Then she smiled again. Again with my box I put my head on her lap. Like this I was there for another two to three minutes. Then Champaklal, again speaking in Bengali, told me, "Ardhendu, this is the time now." There was nothing I could say so slowly I asked her, "Please?" and again I kept my head on her lap. Three times I did that. That was a wonderful thing I had with Mother. I cannot forget that. Never. Even in my next birth, I would be able to remember it. It was wonderful, her hand so soft and her smile. I have never seen a smile like that. This is how I met the Mother.

And about that quotation of Sri Aurobindo: in the year 1974-75 my father had given me the book *The Mother*. I used to read that book every day and it occurred to me one day that this is the quotation one should say everyday, whenever one likes. I have seen that many times when we are in the midst of different emotions like happiness, unhappiness etc., when we remember and say, "Mother everything is you," it becomes very simple. This is what I wanted to share. Do you have anything to ask me?

In response to a question on his life as a child in aspiration:

We were the first Indian family who came to Aspiration. Let me share this openly. Many people actually objected to us, saying, "Why these Indians? They will not keep this place clean and all." So, they visited the Mother and said, "Mother, please take these people away from here. This is not the correct place for them." In fact, all the old Aurovilians might be knowing that. She strongly said, "No, this is the family that must stay in Auroville. And you cannot stop them." Then, some made a snake pit in front of our house to just frighten us. Then my father wrote a letter to her. "Mother with my children, I cannot live with the snakes." Mother called those and asked: "What are you doing? Why are you keeping the snakes? You take them to the snake park in Madras." And it was happily ended. What I meant to say this is that she was soft to the soft, but hard to.... This is the experience from my childhood.

“A Child of Mine Should Never Be Afraid”

Lisbeth

I came to Auroville in May 1971, having travelled with J... from Holland overland in a five-month long road trip. First we heard about Auroville in an underground magazine called Hit week/ Aloha: a small article talked about the galaxy concept and moving sidewalks! We had also obtained with difficulty a first Swiss edition of Satprem's 'Adventure of Consciousness'. We stayed in a guesthouse in Rue Romain Rolland and on the advice of a friendly sadhak we found the blue Auroville school bus, leaving for Auroville from the Ashram every day. Finding ourselves on the red, baked, eroded plateau with a few palmyras, banyans and stunted bushes, we visited several small scattered settlements with the Udavi food van, chauffeured by Dutch 'big Piet'.

These included Promesse, a neat 'douanier' settlement where we saw the maternity and had tea with Narad's wife Anny; after this Hope with Aspiration-type new pyramidal huts, where we met Vijay, Dennis (later Namas), Boris and a Belgian couple Diane & Guido with their son Aurolouis. They invited us to live in Silence (later Bharat Nivas) community where they were moving to, soon. We saw Aspiration; an unreal almost côte d'Azur settlement with French people from the first two caravans dressed smartly and with a lunch buffet spread (cooked by papa Chernet) of vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods; the Bay of Bengal glittering in the distance below—around us a red wasteland crossed by gullies. Kuilapalayam was a small village with grubby urchins peeping into the flap windows of brand-new huts. In the centre, we visited Unity, the Peace area,—on

the site where now Sincerity is located,—and the banyan tree. Arindam and Gene lived there—two Americans, under the precious shade of a few trees. The 'Centre Kitchen' was located on the site where later the Matrimandir Workers Camp would be built. Manned by Guido and Walter (another Belgian, who later set up the Takshinalaya, carpenters workshop), they cooked simple good clean macrobiotic vegetarian food for the first Matrimandir workers. We also visited the fledging nursery, one of the Ashram farms, and Lake Estate.

All the while we were hearing about this incredible woman called 'The Mother' who it seemed attracted all these pioneers.

When we moved from the Ashram to Silence we found a flowering enthusiastic community of mainly Americans farming, planting trees and doing handicrafts (leather): Marjorie, Roy, colourful John (the NY fire brigade officer), Larry, Iris and Daniel with son Mitra, Ravindra and Susan, and many others were moving in and out besides Diane, Guido & Aurolouis with whom we shared a house. Most of us worked at the Matrimandir. Our first job was to actually close the first foundation hole as it had been dug too close to the Banyan tree. We worked in a meditative mood in 42° C or even hotter, throughout the day, carrying chatties of red earth out of the new foundation pit. Ruud Lohman, also Dutch worked along with us and every time our carrying lines crossed, he taught me a new Tamil word. I remember the plans of bringing in mechanical help, in the form of wheel barrows! Caused a revolution!

As Roger Anger's plans for Bharat Nivas took shape and the original site opposite the Nursery was rejected as being too small, we were informed that we had to move. Although Silence had a primitive set-up, for us it was quite an achievement and we had put a lot of energy into the place. No reimbursement at those times! (Perhaps for the well/pump?) We were farming the nearby fields with Varegu, dry crop mottekur (a red rice) without irrigation, ragi and kambu, had a vegetable garden and had planted trees—also set up a leather & embroidery workshop—all with help of some friends from Kottakarai village. So we asked Mother for a place to start a new settlement; we had chosen another site near Kottakarai village. She gave permission with the remark that as we would be situated close

to the village we would have to work with the villagers. So we set up a small (Ayurvedic) clinic right in the village. It was manned by Angela and myself, Constance living on the first floor. The Ayurvedic doctor from the Ashram came out every Sunday to see difficult cases. We set up a sports program and distributed healthy snacks to the children twice a day. A beautiful bamboo playground was built, but disappeared one night presumably as firewood.....

We started with an open well, simple mud and bamboo houses, there was no electricity. For transport and the watering of the fledgling trees, we got a small bullock-cart drawn by personable (bullock) Morris...

Two workshops were built. The first bakery with Larry & Sundaram operated from a barrel oven in the palmyra grove. Bobby & Gerhardt set up a print and paper workshop. A community kitchen was built, and we got some chicken and cows.

But our main work was growing tree seedlings for Bharat Nivas. The building though was deemed so beautiful that it could not be spoiled by greenery.... So, it transpired that we started to plant the seedlings ourselves and this was the beginning of the Northern greenbelt.... We were joined with Kottakarai friends Murugan and his family, Boomadevi & Jayram, and an old Amma who had lived for a while under the Banyan tree at the Centre.

I met the Mother first in the summer of 1971. She had already agreed to our staying (after seeing our black and white photographs taken in Pondy). Not having had any experience with which to measure our first darshan, we felt an out of this world, spacey experience; afterwards, sitting at the samadhi, we were unable to leave.

Waiting on the sun drenched terrace before being admitted, I felt light and awkward at the same time in my red earth-stained first sari. Mother looked me intently in the eyes; it seemed I kneeled before Her for ages. She mumbled, "Ah, ma fille c'est tres bien que tu est venue". In retrospect that was probably the time I unconsciously decided to stay, which was not our plan.

I met Mother several times after that, mostly on birthdays and in the public darshan: down in the crowded street when an

intense silence fell as She came out on the balcony, Her absolutely powerful presence pervading everybody and everything.

Mother used to name the newborn children and when my eldest was born in the brand-new Aspiration Health Centre we asked Her for a name, at that time via Maggie as Mother was already retired and not well. We got the name Auro Mukta. It was 23rd September 1973. In three weeks time four baby girls were born: on the same day Auromala (Promesse), also from Kottakatai a little later, Aurohira (the daughter of Constance and Iris) and Aurobhama (to Klaus & Ingrid at Nine Palms)

Mother was not seen in public any more. On the 17th November 1973 we heard the improbable news that Mother had left Her physical body. All were in shock: J... and I with our two-months-old baby Muktâ, Iris and Constance with baby Mirâ, along with Klaus Ingrid and Bhamâ walked all the way to Kootroad to catch a bus to Pondy. At the Ashram gate we were refused permission to enter on account of having the small babies with us, till Klaus raised his booming voice and said: "These are the last children named by the Mother." Then the gate keeper let us in. The babies were intent on everything going on (tearing of hair and wailing at the Samadhi, the still atmosphere around Mother lying in state under the silver vault of the meditation room beneath Sri Aurobindo's room).

The period after was one of intense loss and sadness, confusion and battle with the Sri Aurobindo Society. But everyone or almost everyone was sure that the Mother's physical role could not be taken over by any one person. Nevertheless Her power and presence were still felt strongly in the subtle physical as they are at present.

One or two more remembrances: A quiet, sweltering afternoon after lunch (in the AV Dining-Room at the back of the Boulevard). I sat at the Samadhi; the only other person there was an old sadhak. We could hear Mother and others talking; French, English, loud arguments. All of sudden Her voice rang out: "You kill me with your devotion...." The sadhak and I looked at each other and all became very quiet.

A friend from Forecomers wanted to visit the Samadhi, a western sadhak with long hair and beard. He was denied access.

Mother sent a messenger down instantly: he can come straight up to Her! "You see," She said, "it is for a special purpose I appoint the guards, he has his lesson to learn."

I used to do night-watches (12 midnight to 6 am) at Matrimandir construction site—just the concrete ribs coming up—sitting on a desk, with one sharp floodlight. Our work was to run the pump and water the concrete with a hosepipe, climbing and hanging on precariously to the structure. The sea is loud, fever birds call, the wide skies are littered with stars—no other sounds. I used the time to write, read and meditate in that peaceful, powerful setting.

Walking there before midnight barefoot with a flickering kerosene lamp; and to pass the Kali Temple halfway was always a strange, sometimes frightening, experience. It was as if I was pulled back towards the Kali Temple and could not get to the Matrimandir.

I mentioned this once to a sadhak (I used to work twice a week with Lisa who had set up a workshop for embroidered garments called Eurocreation and stayed overnight with her in the Ashram, meeting many sadhaks). He told me that the Mother had given a very simple mantra: "A child of mine should never be afraid"—and reciting this with every step, I indeed encountered no more obstacles on the way.

“I Had the Darshan Like Hanuman”

K. Raman

I think it was the last Balcony Darshan facing the East up in the top of the Ashram building, Pondicherry. I do not remember exactly the year, may be it could be 1973.

Those days the workers of Auroville were always given an opportunity and taken to the Mother’s Darshan. If my memory goes well, there were lots of people waiting and standing on the road looking up: something is going to happen. There was a great silence expecting the Mother to come out to the Balcony.

That day a little shower from the sky could not disturb the crowd’s aspiration.

Yes, there was the Mother in the Balcony accompanied by someone. She once walked across the length looking down to all the people who were looking up.

It might have lasted about 5 or 10 minutes and made a great impression in me.

I happened to be one among others who had the opportunity. Although my name is Raman, I had the Darshan like Hanuman.

*For worship lifts the worshipper’s bowed strength
Close to the god’s pride and bliss his soul adores:...*

Memorable Moments with the Mother

Peter A.

It was at the end of December 1970 when I was landing at New Delhi airport on a four weeks surprise trip to India. I was warmly greeted by the golden rays of an early morning sun when coming down the gangway and breathing in the fresh air of a misty dawn. It was my first encounter with India and it was during that first day that I was struck by an overwhelming and deep sensation of finally coming home.

When travelling through Northern India the following weeks that intensive impression never left me and did warmly colour my daily encounters. It was like looking through the eyes of the soul and the soul only. An atmosphere of inner calm and timelessness took hold of me. I was as if embraced by Mother India and had no choice but to dismiss my scheduled return flight and instead to embark on a long lasting memorable journey through the whole of India with just a hundred dollars left in my pocket. At that moment of utter freedom it was only logical to choose Pondicherry as the very first goal and destiny because there was the Sri Aurobindo Ashram which persistently had remained in my memory.

Way back in Germany, after having been part of the student revolt at West Berlin's universities seeking a radically new way of life I came across a book of a newly published paperback edition, a series of monographs, the first one being dedicated to Sri Aurobindo. This simple and honest account of his life, thoughts and universal work had an enormous impact on my life: finally I had found somebody who could convincingly 'explain' to me everything and without flaw—no questions left!

It triggered in myself a stunning recognition of the essential oneness of all life and beyond all mental comprehension it became the one book carrying the one magic word changing my life. This experience stayed on in my body like a rock, it never left me.

Now, just one year later, having been thrown into India as if out of the blue and following its call against all odds, it was only natural to turn my attention to Pondicherry straight away, what else?! It was the beginning of a new adventure:

The early morning ride from the station through the small township was graced by a serene atmosphere which became ever more tangible when coming closer to the Ashram.

Days later in the Ashram guesthouse I heard news about the 'birthday darshan of the Mother' whose portraits were seen everywhere. At first I did not pay much attention to frequent invitations to come to her 'darshan'. This 'Mother' was barely in my mind and even less on my agenda. Obviously didn't she leave the same impression in that famous book? Moreover I wasn't too much interested to see a 'guru' or a 'grande dame' at her balcony. Yet, as destiny willed I was gently encouraged by one of those early pioneers from Auroville to go anyway so as to look for myself what's on with 'the pope on the balcony'. Well, it turned out to be the most memorable event of my life.

It was February 21st under a warm Indian afternoon sun when we arrived in that small street adjacent to the main ashram building where already thousands of devotees had gathered. It seemed they had come from all over India, most of them in their traditional white clothing, a few westerners among them. There was a lot of chatting and excitement mixed with an atmosphere of intense expectation for that special moment to come. I landed just in the middle of the packed crowd getting fully the feel of it all. By and then one or the other was looking intensely up to the roof terrace where the Mother was to appear at any moment.

Suddenly a great silence descended on all and everybody, the air felt still and compact, when a small hand was seen groping

along the railing up there. Then a little face was emerging slowly from behind radiating the presence of a great power.

I was stunned: as if looking into the face of a baby ape I was looking into the face of evolution itself. When hearing two westerners next to me talking to each other like: oh; she is old and fragile, I was wondering in utter disbelief—look, can't you see, cant you see the eternal himself?! During those minutes of eternity and feeling the massive experience in my body I followed Her when she was slowly moving down the railing from one end to the other. At one moment she suddenly was like throwing herself over the railing with such a concentrated power so to reach out to everybody, no one to be left out, to perceive all, to be seen by everyone who had gathered there from one end of the street to the other—and everybody was looking up to her.

I was caught by her overwhelming glance, a stream of compact energy from eye to eye, soul to soul, in utter abandon and trust...

Long after the Mother had retreated to her room and the crowd had dissolved I was still standing there all alone in the deserted street, I had not moved an inch as if glued to that sacred power point where that Presence was still there all powerful, that feeling of total bond without fear ... and no time, no time.

It sounded as if from far away when my companion, trying to get me back to time-bound reality, appealed to me: Peter, she is gone since long, let's go! — yes, yes, I made an attempt to gather myself and to get going, but only to sit down a few steps further at the edge of the street ... remaining there for a very long time keeping my sacred space.

For many years I didn't talk to anybody about my precious experience. To myself I could say that I never felt such a power emanating from a human being, an overwhelming power, which instead of closing me because of fear it opened me up like a flower to the sun, because it is the power of all encompassing love. At that eternal moment there was no more outside, there was only that immense presence lived through the feeling of an indestructible bond of consciousness-force.

Much later, when asked and recounting my experience to

friends and seekers alike, it dawned to me that this very day may have been really my day, 'my' darshan.

Anyway it happened to be the last and decisive encounter which changed the course of my life, all beginning with a simple book on Sri Aurobindo, the divine word in action, with the discovery of Mother India as being my spiritual homeland, and Auroville, the promised land, 'the tower of babel in reverse'.

I remain for ever grateful that I have been offered these four essential gifts of my life which nourish me, give me strength and the power of joy.

WE REMEMBER...

When asked for a message, from our respected brother Nirod-da for a session, he expressed:

“What can I say about Her? She is the great mystery... no words can describe Her, vast, immense, indefinable....

* * *

Amal-da from his bed at Nursing Home recited this poem for us saying he will be present in spirit. The recorded poem was played at the session.

THIS ERRANT LIFE

*This errant life is dear although it dies;
And human lips are sweet though they but sing
Of stars estranged from us; and youth's emprise
Is wondrous yet, although an unsure thing.*

*Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!
I fear to soar lest tender bonds decrease.
If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,
Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow.
For 'tis with mouth of clay I supplicate:
Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
And all Thy formless glory turn to love
And mould Thy love into a human face.*

* * *

"In Peace and Silence the Eternal manifests; allow nothing to disturb you and the Eternal will manifest; have perfect equality in face of all and the Eternal will be there...." The Mother.

We remember with gratitude our Ashram brothers and sisters, our Auroville brothers and sisters and all others, who have provided us with sustained energy by remembering THEM with us in silence.

* * *

From Auroville News issue dated September 29, 2001:

André of New Creation remembered Her from 1973 and beautifully echoed many people's feeling from that time that she had concentrated her force into the physical of all who are in Her, consciously or unconsciously, that she is ever present. Lasting Remembrance is the significance given by the Mother to sky-blue flowers called Myosotis Sylvatica: the remembrance of that which has helped the being to progress.

He also remembered how strongly the Mother has said Auroville is to prevent war, to work for peace and human unity through harmony and collaboration.

* * *

From Auroville News issue dated December 1, 2001:

Renu, also named by the Mother, 'Golden Dust' remembered all the childhood memories of meeting with the Mother and trying always to find the colour of Her eyes but always getting lost in the sheer delight of being with Her so that even today she is still not sure what colour Her eyes were. And then the sublime experiences when Auroville jokes about the supramental vanished and instead came the knowing of who the Mother was, still to a child she is just a mother! Of course, the early days of Auroville and growing up with parents who also felt like kids!

* * *

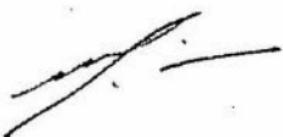
Auroculture told us the story of the extra-ordinary time when she and her Persian husband were invited by the Mother well documented in the Mother's Agenda and the history of the formation of Auroville International. She shared a common experience we all have that of the inner contact and conversation with the Mother, whether we met Her personally or not.

From *Auroville News* issue dated January 26, 2002:

Ajit explained how he came to Pondicherry as a young man before he had completed his studies and was led to the Mother quite unknowingly. This led to the discovery of the Mother and Her Golden eyes.

* * *

My love and
blessings are
always with you for
progress
and
transformation.



From Light to Delight

Varadharajan

The Mother had declared 1971 as 'A sweet year' and Auroville is a special beneficiary of that sweetness.

In the new millennium, as a manifestation of the recapturing of that sweetness, a 'Remembering the Mother' and 'Remembering Sri Aurobindo' programme was started in the beginning of 2001 and continued till the end of 2004, the leap year. Each time it was a special occasion. This book is a collection of many of these sharings.

We hope that through all these remembrances that are gathered here, the Sweet Presence of our Mother and Sri Aurobindo which was felt during the happenings is recaptured again and is carried on to the Future.

Remembrances are both subjective and objective. The speakers who consented to publish their precious intimate moments had one primary concern—to pass on with gratitude what they received from Her to those who are ready and aspiring. Each speaker tried to convey his inmost soul feelings through an external medium—English—and we did not 'engliscise' his spiritual meanings that are well conveyed as it is. Everything is undergoing a churning and metamorphosis, including the language of communication...

We are beginners in the Auroville adventure...

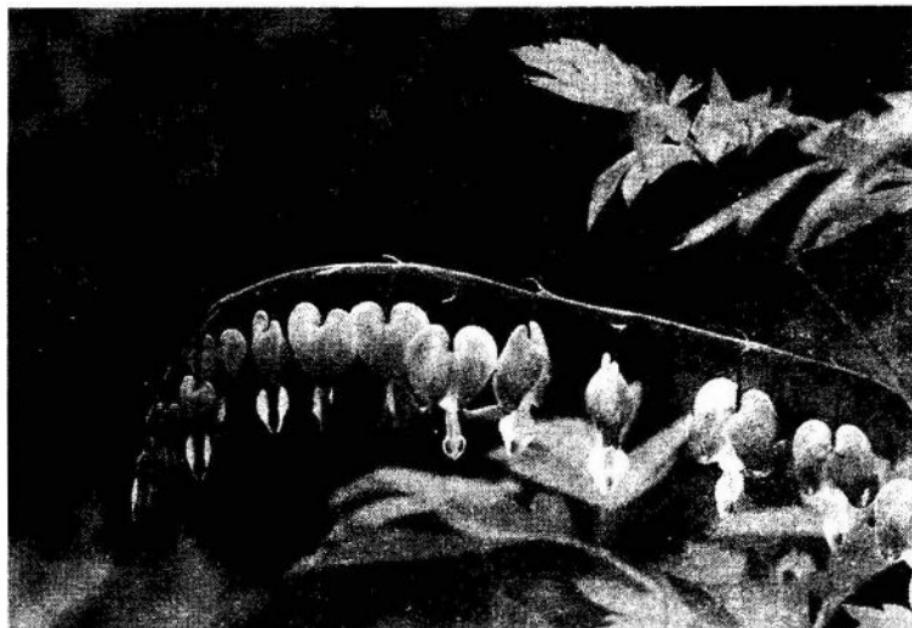
We are Her children in Her vast kindergarten, even now... 'Pioneers' in Her compassionate word... and in the world. Kindly use your imagination to fill up any deficiency on our part.

We join with Saint Thyagājā who has sung in his *pancharatna kriti* —

“*Yendaro Mahanu Bhavulu Andariki Vandana mulu.*”

(Many are the great: Salutations to all.)

* * *



Emotional remembrance

Only the circumstances that have helped us in our search for the Divine should be the object of this remembrance.
Dicentra spectabilis. Rose pink.

*I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
 Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
 Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
 Forerunners of a divine multitude,
 Out of the paths of the morning star they came
 Into the little room of mortal life.*

Ending with a Beginning

Richard

And I would like to end with an experience I had,—all had—when the Mother read a passage from ‘Savitri’ Book Eleven beginning with the words: “Choose, spirit, thy supreme choice not given again” for the 1st December programme: She would read this sitting in a chair facing the Darshan room,—which is opposite to the one now and it was put after Sri Aurobindo passed away—slowly, because of the recording. The shutters leading to the ashram courtyard were closed. It was fairly dark; Mother had a little light to read by and then she said something which took me completely by surprise. She said, “Let us read to Sri Aurobindo,”—so sweetly, so simply, so modestly. I was very, very touched; this was in the 60’s and I noticed that when the Mother spoke the word Lord, you feel that vibration which is so special—it is not anybody saying Lord, it is the Mother saying “O Lord”. That sweetness has always filled me with something very special as it reveals something of what the Mother must have felt towards Sri Aurobindo.

*“Choose, spirit, thy supreme choice not given again;
For now from my highest being looks at thee
The nameless formless peace where all things rest.
In a happy vast sublime cessation know,—
An immense extinction in eternity,
A point that disappears in the infinite,—
Felicity of the extinguished flame,
Last sinking of a wave in a boundless sea,
End of the trouble of thy wandering thoughts,
Close of the journeying of thy pilgrim soul.
Accept, O music, weariness of thy notes,
O stream, wide breaking of thy channel banks.”*

The moments fell into eternity.
 But someone yearned within a bosom unknown
 And silently the woman's heart replied:
 "Thy peace, O Lord, a boon within to keep
 Amid the roar and ruin of wild Time
 For the magnificent soul of man on earth.
 Thy calm, O Lord, that bears thy hands of joy."
 Limitless like ocean round a lonely isle
 A second time the eternal cry arose:
 "Wide open are the ineffable gates in front.
 My spirit leans down to break the knot of earth,
 Amorous of oneness without thought or sign
 To cast down wall and fence, to strip heaven bare,
 See with the large eye of infinity,
 Unweave the stars and into silence pass."
 In an immense and world-destroying pause
 She heard a million creatures cry to her.
 Through the tremendous stillness of her thoughts
 Immeasurably the woman's nature spoke:
 "Thy oneness, Lord, in many approaching hearts,
 My sweet infinity of thy numberless souls."
 Mightily retreating like a sea in ebb
 A third time swelled the great admonishing call:
 "I spread abroad the refuge of my wings.
 Out of its incommunicable deeps
 My power looks forth of mightiest splendour, stilled
 Into its majesty of sleep, withdrawn
 Above the dreadful whirlings of the world."
 A sob of things was answer to the voice,
 And passionately the woman's heart replied:
 "Thy energy, Lord, to seize on woman and man,
 To take all things and creatures in their grief
 And gather them into a mother's arms."
 Solemn and distant like a seraph's lyre
 A last great time the warning sound was heard:

*"I open the wide eye of solitude
To uncover the voiceless rapture of my bliss,
Where in a pure and exquisite hush it lies
Motionless in its slumber of ecstasy,
Resting from the sweet madness of the dance
Out of whose beat the throb of hearts was born."
Breaking the Silence with appeal and cry
A hymn of adoration tireless climbed,
A music beat of winged uniting souls,
Then all the woman yearningly replied:
"Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,
Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,
Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,
Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men."*

* * *



Remembrance

Constant remembrance of the Divine is indispensable for transformation.

Lycianthes rantonnei. Mauve

Constant remembrance of the Divine

Spontaneous and joyful. The ideal condition.

Lonicera japonica. Ivory white

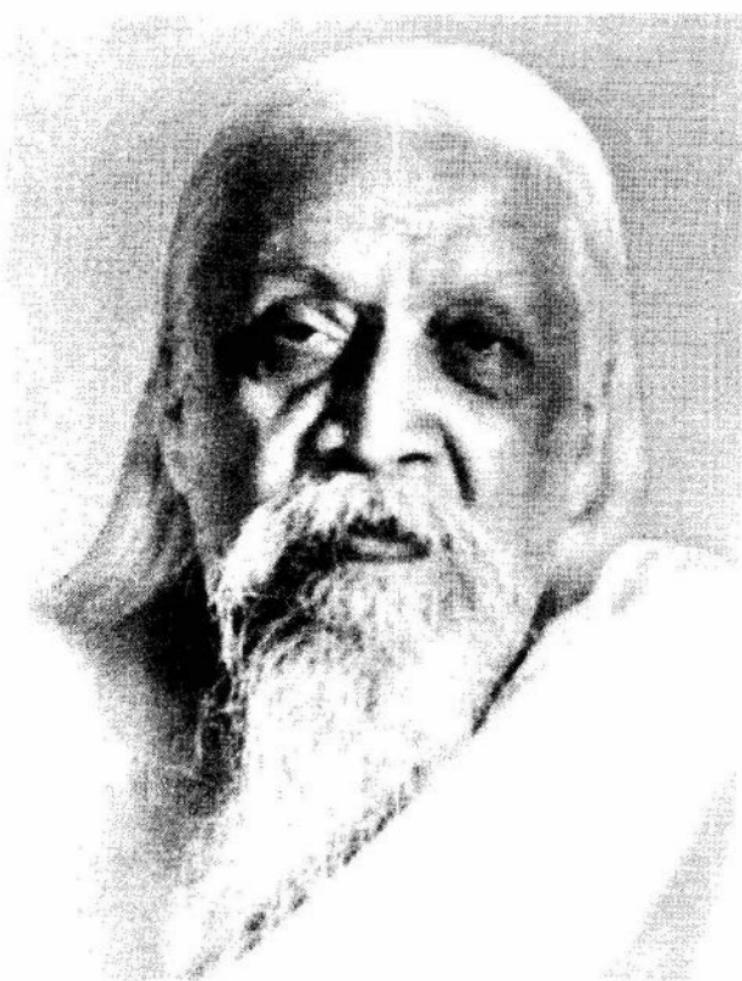


Lasting remembrance -

The remembrance of that which has helped the being to progress.
Myosotis sylvatica. Sky blue

“If this is she of whom the world has heard,
Wonder no more at any happy change.
Each easy miracle of felicity
Of her transmuting heart the alchemy is.”

SRI AUROBINDO



Sri Aurobindo

*Give us a faith active and ardent,
absolute and unshakable in Thy Victory.*

